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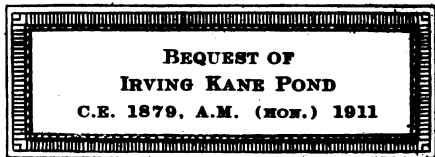
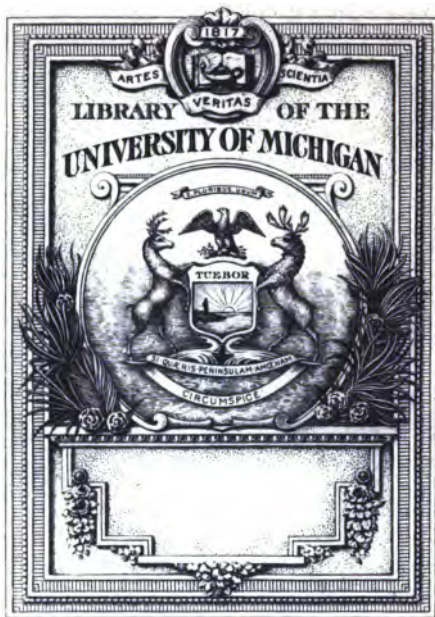
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THE » TEMPLE
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Carpenter, William Boyd, bp of Ripon

**AN
INTRODUCTION
TO THE STUDY
OF THE
SCRIPTURES**



**BY THE
LORD BISHOP OF
RIPON**

**LONDON: J. M. DENT & CO. : MCMIII.
PHILADELPHIA: J. B. LIPPINCOTT & CO.**

'I dream'd that with a passionate complaint
I wish'd me born amid God's deeds of might ;
And envied those who had the presence bright
Of gifted Prophet and strong-hearted Saint,
Whom my heart loves, and Fancy strives to paint.
I turn'd, when straight a stranger met my sight,
Came as my guest, and did awhile unite
His lot with mine, and lived without restraint.
Courteous he was, and grave—so meek in mien
It seemed untrue, or told a purpose weak ;
Yet in the mood he could with a fitness speak,
Or with stern force, or show of feelings keen,
Marking deep craft, methought, or hidden pride :—
Then came a voice, " St. Paul is at thy side. " "

J. H. NEWMAN, 1833.

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The Temple Bible

INTRODUCTORY

FOR WHOM I WRITE

I WRITE for those who are troubled and perplexed. I do not write for those who have persuaded themselves that the Bible is an obsolete book, full of dubious fable and deficient in spiritual force. I do not write for those who believe that the search after truth, which is legitimate elsewhere, is profane when it approaches the Bible. I write for those who know that there is a real message in the Bible, but who fear that the value and clearness of the message has been impaired by modern criticism. I do not pretend to give either an exhaustive or even an approximate account of the progress and condition of the critical questions which have been discussed in recent times. I write not as an expert, but as one who approaches the subject with the hypothesis which must now be familiar to all

Bible students : I write as one of the many who have been compelled to ask themselves the question—If the general results of modern criticism are to be admitted, how far is the message of the Bible rendered obsolete? Is the spiritual force of the Bible as a practical aid to life diminished? In the short space of a brief introduction it is impossible to answer this question fully, but I have sought to indicate certain lines of thought which may enable those for whom I write to reach a satisfactory answer.

I make no secret of my own conviction that the time has come when Christian people must endeavour to understand these critical questions. I make no secret of my own conviction that, though some critics have been rash and unskilful, the general results of what is called the higher criticism and its scientific methods will come to be accepted ; but as one who, though not pretending to be in any sense an expert, has not closed his eyes to the advance of knowledge, I write with an increased conviction that the Divine character of the message in these books has been rendered more intelligible by what has happened. I do not of course mean that there has been no increase of difficulties and that no problems have been raised which will not need the patient study of years adequately to solve, but I do mean that the character of the message which

comes to the student of the Bible has become more clear. We have learned to look away from profitless questions to the practical and important ones of the unfolding of the Divine message, of the gradual unveiling of the Divine character, and of the spiritual principles which govern the relation of God our Father to the souls of men. These principles on investigation will be found to be constant : the explication of them, and the separation of them from temporary and earthly notions, is the work of sound theology, but the manifestation of them so far as the practical needs of the individual soul is concerned is in Christ alone, and is in Him sufficient for all.

The steps by which men have been led up to this truth are disclosed in the Bible—which is therefore from one point of view the record of the spiritual discoveries made by men, and from another the self-disclosures of God : of His character and of the order of His kingdom ; for it cannot be too often repeated that what from one point of view may be called human progress may from another be called Divine guidance. This, which is true in all human history, finds its counterpart in the Bible ; but the distinguishing mark of the Bible is perhaps this, that the presence, providence and revealings of God are continuously recognised : it gives us the history of a people who, notwithstanding their failings and their fallings, lived in the consciousness

of God as no other people have done, and who have bequeathed to us a volume, which has more deeply than any other volume exercised the intellect of the learned, formed the morals of Society, and inspired the souls of men.

CHAPTER I

THE BIBLE AND ITS TRUTH

THE Bible is that familiar volume, containing sixty-six books, known to us by various names from Genesis to Revelation. It is the volume which has been revered in every household in our land; our fathers and our fathers' fathers knew by heart its stories, its inspiring songs, its precepts and its many words of consolation: it is the volume from which the sad have drawn inexhaustible comfort: it has been the companion of the lonely, and the source of unquenchable hope to the poor: the solitary night watcher upon fortress walls or upon the battlefield has found courage in recalling its words, and the simple-hearted have learned to bear sorrow and desolateness with patience inspired by its pages. There have been thousands who have found strength and endurance of soul because, like Cowper's pious peasant woman, they

'Just know and know no more, their Bible true,
A truth the brilliant Frenchman never knew.'

But can we of to-day place ourselves in the simple peasant woman's place? Was Voltaire right, and the

trustful Christian soul wrong? Can we any longer speak of knowing the Bible true?

The Truth of the Bible. This is the question which, under many forms, has been asked for many ages, and in none more persistently than at present. Is it too much to say that a widespread feeling of doubt about the answer has given rise to a certain neglect of Bible study? The feeling of general uncertainty has led numbers to postpone, if not to abandon, that study from which our ancestors drew such firm, abiding consolation and good hope.

Two Kinds of Doubt. It is needful to face this question if we would realise the abiding value of the Bible. Nothing is more fatal to progress than that uncertainty which is the product of ignorance and indolence. There is, indeed, an uncertainty which stimulates faith; this is uncertainty as to incidents and events, and faith which holds to the ultimate victory of good can endure uncertainty on intermediate matters; but uncertainty as to the principles of life's conduct is a paralysing uncertainty, and leads to vacillation of purpose, and too often closes in profitlessness of life. There is a doubt which falls a victim to fear, which loses heart of enterprise, and pusillanimously buries its talent in the earth. There is thus an uncertainty which we should endeavour to banish, and an uncertainty which we should be ready to endure. Thus uncertainty about minor matters, such as the date of events or the order of some

chapters, or on such questions as whether a particular narrative is parable or fact, may well be accepted, while uncertainty about practical duties of faith and life is intolerable. Hence all must feel that there is a great difference between the subsidiary facts of the Bible history and the great spiritual principles which are unfolded to us there. Some matters and incidents might easily have been otherwise; and if they had been so, no difference would have been felt by us: we should not have been deprived of any single spiritual truth. It is really not important to us to know how many knives were brought back from Babylon or how many people were slaughtered in a certain battle; and if it would have made no matter to us whether the knives brought back were many or few, or whether the slain were ten thousand or fifteen thousand, is it not clear that the accuracy of the Bible text in such matters is of really small moment?

Distinction between Historical Accuracy and Spiritual Truths. When, therefore, we speak of the truth of the Bible, it is important to understand what we mean. We must distinguish between the spiritual truths which the Bible conveys, and the accuracy or inaccuracy of certain incidental matters, between great principles and the truth of the interpretations given to certain passages. Further, the spiritual truth is sometimes wholly independent of the historical accuracy of the narrative. We can learn just as much from the parable of the Prodigal Son, whether the story were based upon an

actual incident or not. It is of no moment to settle this question. We have all known prodigal sons and their elder brothers. Probably we have been both ourselves. At the outset we may say that this distinction between the spiritual truth which is abiding, and the historical accuracy of the story in which it is presented, is one of essential importance. The religious student seeks for the former : the historian's business is with the latter ; and the religious student neither forsakes his search nor loses his treasure in frankly accepting the assistance of the historical investigator. Of course there are points in which the work of both these students may, so to speak, overlap : the spade of the archæologist may seem to come perilously near the foundation of the sacred shrine of faith ; but there are things which cannot be shaken, and truth is the highest law, and eternal life is independent of questions of names : it does not consist in knowing dates or in distinguishing between history and parable ; but it is a knowledge of our true relationship to God, of the characteristics involved in that relationship, and of the power of realising both it and them. This is the knowledge which gives to all life its abiding force, according to that word of Christ. 'This is life eternal, that they should know thee the only true God, and him whom thou didst send, even Jesus Christ' (John xvii. 3).

This Distinction needful to the Bible Student. The distinction between permanent spiritual truths and questions of merely intellectual or historical interest then is to be

remembered, when we ask whether Cowper's pious old woman was justified in believing her Bible to be true. There was one class of thought which deeply interested her : there were others for which she had neither taste nor aptitude : all that touched the relationship of her spirit to God was to her of real moment and of overwhelming interest : questions of the historical value of certain stories, accuracy of numbers, of dates, of nomenclature, were outside her field of vision. Doubtless she was at times very literal in her mode of interpretation. She would have been unable to realise the necessity of transferring one portion of a book to another place, or of understanding the question of a second Isaiah ; this only means that she was an uneducated person, but a little conversation with her would have convinced us that the strength of her faith was due to her apprehension of the permanent relationship between herself and God, and to the confidence which the knowledge of that relationship established. In other words, she was alive chiefly to the spiritual truths conveyed to her through the Bible study : of these she found abundant and unfailing illustration in story, psalm and prophecy. The sense in which the Bible was true to her lay in the fact that its study made clear to her the relationship of her soul to God, and the conditions, joys, sorrows and experiences arising out of the desire for, or the conviction of that relationship. Other questions of great intellectual interest—questions of date, circumstances, literary or historical coherency, of style, language and custom—were practically outside her field of vision.

And unconsciously recognised by the Spiritually-minded, who drew Real Strength from the Bible. It is desirable to understand this distinction, for it is one which, if I mistake not, existed probably unconsciously, but very truly, among thousands better informed than Cowper's pious cottager.

Once the Bible was the daily companion of every sincere and genuine Christian man and woman in this country. Our forefathers would take no journey without it. Grave men, old and grey-headed, whose business was among great affairs of commerce or politics, would find leisure to study their Bibles every day, and marked passages, underlined texts, and manuscript cross-references indicated the loving diligence with which they had pored over its pages.

We are not going to indulge in laments: we shall not alarm ourselves or imagine that there are fewer such devout students to-day than there were of old; but we may ask whether a change has not come over the thoughts of men with regard to the general value of the Bible. Once it was believed that no elevated piety, no ripe religious experience could be reached except by those who read their Bibles, and meditated upon them day and night. There are many men who would challenge this position of old-fashioned piety. There are now, as there have been before, some who depreciate the spiritual value of the Bible in the supposed interests of the Church; but without reckoning these, who are like men who saw off the branch of the tree on which they are seated, there are

others who have been led to doubt the spiritual value of the Bible, because they think that modern criticism has altered the whole relation of the Bible to the spiritual life of men. They seem to think that, if the stories of Balaam and Jonah be largely charged with a poetical spirit, the strong and tender bond between God and man is weakened or perhaps broken. They imagine that, if the 110th Psalm were not written by David, the work of Christ in knitting up the unravelled threads of human life has been rendered vain. I shall endeavour to show in the next chapter that men's souls are not thus easily sundered from the love and care of God.

CHAPTER II

SPIRITUAL TRUTH AND QUESTIONS OF TIME

Relationship between God and the Soul independent of Time Questions. On this difference between spiritual principles and historical truth we must try to clear our thoughts; but before we proceed to deal with it it is needful again to remind ourselves that the spiritual help which our forefathers gained from the devout and daily study of the Bible was very largely independent of those questions of criticism which have become prominent in modern times. The pious man of those uncritical days had little or no thought of criticism as we now understand it. He read every book of the Bible, seeking to draw from it personal edification: his mind was not anxious to settle the date of a book or to disentangle a misplaced passage from an irrelevant context: his soul was athirst for God: he sought to read in this wonderful book the ways of God to men: he watched in its histories the indications of providence: he observed the working out of the laws of right and wrong: he delighted in studying the character of Christ: he pondered His words: his heart bled as he read the story of the Cross: he was filled with triumph as

he thought of the risen Lord. He felt that sin within him was the greatest evil, and he followed with softened heart and kindling hope the arguments of the Apostles as they proclaimed the forgiveness of sins, the gift of a helping and healing Spirit for all, and expectations of a golden and glorious age filled their horizon with the light of a new dawn as they thought of the Christ who was to come again, in like manner as He had gone into heaven.

This Relationship is not lightly set aside. If we will consider this picture of the range of thought which belonged to our devout forefathers, and if we separate all in it which crosses the path of modern criticism, we shall, I think, realise how very little the direction and purpose of their pious studies would be interrupted by the questions which disturb us to-day. Our ancestors were as fishermen in the English Channel, whose work might well go on, although cross-channel steamers plied more frequently and more rapidly between England and France. Occasionally some fishing vessel might be run down by the swift-going vessel, but the fishermen would still continue to follow their trade and find their livelihood upon the waters. In other words, let us realise that the spiritual forces, to whose existence and power the Bible bears witness, are forces practically independent of those questions which have agitated and disturbed the religious world. The relationships between God and the human soul are constant: the Bible more clearly and vividly than

any other book expresses, illustrates and enforces those relationships ; and this function of the Bible is hardly disturbed by modern critical theories.

Different Kinds of Truth. There are, in fact, different kinds of truth. Some truths belong only to matters transient : others to things permanent : some truths are accidental or incidental : others are essential : some are of such a nature that it would not matter to us much whether the fact were otherwise or no : others are of such a nature that we could not conceive of the matter differently. For instance, the fact that a stone falls at a certain rate towards the earth is an incidental truth : it is incidental to the earth on which we live : the rate of falling is different in other planets ; but the fact or law of gravitation is not incidental : it is a fact common to all. The fact that William the Conqueror began to reign in 1066 is one which does not specially concern us : it would not have mattered to us whether he began to reign that year or a year earlier or a year later, but the fact of the Norman Conquest is a fact of real importance in our national life : the fact that sixteen ounces make one pound is only an arbitrary fact : it is quite easy to think of a pound containing only twelve ounces or consisting of as many as twenty ounces ; but the facts that the whole is greater than its part, and that two straight lines cannot enclose a space are facts which we cannot imagine being otherwise : they are facts which seem to us to be pervasive and permanent.

Spiritual Relationship the Supreme Question in the Bible. To put this matter of the spiritual value of the Bible briefly, then, we repeat, that we must distinguish between principles which reveal the relationship of man to God, and which make clear the conditions of that relationship and which help man to realise it, and those other questions of merely intellectual interest, which belong to the province of the historian and the critic. The most superficial view of the Bible will enable us to see that these can be kept apart. The Bible gives us the picture of the way in which man was led to realise by degrees his relationship to God. The first sense which he has of this relationship is tinged with materialism: he knows that he depends upon the deity or deities: he believes that he can secure the guardian care of his own God: he is taught to realise that God has a will, and that man must conform to God's will, not God to man's wish: the idea of the righteousness of the Divine will is preached in man's ears by great and enlightened teachers whom we call prophets. Slowly the perception of the righteousness of God and the need of man's conformity to God's righteousness grows in Israel: this is succeeded by the conviction that life is best lived in fulfilling God's righteous will at all costs, that the relationship of the soul to God is the relationship of a servant to a master: this is exchanged for a nobler thought, the relationship is that of a son to a father. Then He comes who lives the life of that relationship, as He first disclosed with adequate clearness that this was the true relationship in which man

should live. After He had declared and disclosed His relationship, He left as a legacy to man the gift of the Spirit that each man might for himself and in himself realise that relationship (Rom. viii. 16 ; 1 John ii. 20, iii. 1, 2, and v. 10). Outside the spiritual principles which are involved in this relationship, there are multitudes of deeply-interesting questions, but these are questions which have an importance in clearing our minds on matters of history, archæology, geography and ethnology, and have only an incidental connection with spiritual revelation : they do not practically touch the spiritual questions we have spoken of : they only deal with the vesture, not with the soul. When man prays in God's temple, the question of questions is the relation of his soul to God : the description of the garment he wears is comparatively insignificant. If, therefore, we can study the Bible, and observe in it the stages by which man was brought to realise the deep, loving and changeless relationship of his soul to God, to notice the conditions of that relationship as expressed in spiritual experience, and the powers and joys attainable by those who enter into that relationship, we shall not be greatly disturbed by the fate of the other questions we have alluded to. It will not greatly matter that we have to re-sort our ideas of the exactitude of this or that story, to admit the later date of this book or that portion of a book, to realise that those who edited the Bible made use of material of varying historical worth. Revelation achieves its work by establishing the relation of man to God, and the relationship so revealed remains un-

changed—a thing which cannot be shaken. If we realise this, we shall enter with calm and intelligent interest into the study of other questions connected with the Bible: we shall not be indifferent to the answers which may be given, but we shall not be anxious about results, or angry with those who are seeking truth.

CHAPTER III

CRITICISM INEVITABLE

The Inevitableness of Criticism of the Old Testament.
The simplest way of reassuring our minds concerning the criticism of the Old Testament is to recall one or two facts. Let us ask what in fact is the general attitude of Christian opinion towards the Old Testament. Does the most strict believer in mechanical theories of inspiration accept all parts of the Old Testament as of equal value or of equal obligation? He at least does not believe in the obligation of the sacrificial customs, and he most certainly makes no attempt to observe the ceremonial law. If we ask him why, as a believer in the Divine authority of the Bible, he does not keep its commandments in these matters, his reply is that Christ is the end of the law, that these ordinances had only a temporary force, and at best a typical value. Whatever obligation, therefore, these laws had upon Israel, they have no authority over those who in Christ have been made free from the law.

Criticism tacitly adopted. Now let us consider the principles involved in this answer. First, it is admitted that certain parts of the Old Testament had only a transitory obligation and value: they were steps in the education of the people according to God's providence:

they suited one age : they were unsuitable for another. In other words, it is admitted that the Old Testament reveals a progressive order of teaching. But, secretly, the answer admits the right, nay, the duty of criticism ; since it admits that Christian people do and must judge between the transitory and the permanent elements of the Old Testament. The answer implies that in the exercise of their own judgment, *i.e.*, criticism, Christian people set aside one part of the old law as inapplicable and no longer obligatory, while other parts they admit to have an abiding force. Thus it will be said that the moral law is binding, but the ceremonial law is not. And when we come to inquire more carefully, we find that great divergence exists among Christian people on the nature and extent of the obligation of any part of the Jewish law on ourselves. Some declare that no part of the law, not even the moral law, is binding on Christian people : others that only the moral law is binding : some again extend this, and seem to claim that the social laws are binding ; and some few would bring back the obligation of a great part of the ceremonial law. The Sunday question is a case in point. It is not within my province to enter into these discrepancies : they are only mentioned to show that, though criticism is decried by some, yet it is practically exercised by all.

The Real Choice is between Scientific or Unscientific Criticism. The real question therefore is not whether criticism is to be allowed or not, for all use it ; but whether criticism is to follow an orderly and scientific

method or to follow the vagaries of individual prejudice or caprice.

Is it not better, in other words, to read the Old Testament with an open mind, to remember that it is a composite work disclosing to us the successive stages of religious, social and moral progress of a remarkable people, and that its chiefest value is, not in giving laws which bind us who have received the law of Christ, but in enabling us to see that God never left Himself without witness, and that He trained and educated Israel through various stages of religious growth.

The Bible View of Its Own History. Further, Is not this the very account of the matter which is given us by Prophet and by Psalmist? Read the words of Hosea.

‘When Israel was a child I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt.

‘As I called them, so they went from me : they sacrificed unto Baalim, and burned incense to graven images.

‘I taught Ephraim also to go, taking them by their arms ; but they knew not that I healed them.

‘I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love : and I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws, and I laid meat unto them’ (Hosea xi. 1-4).

Can words more clearly express the educative character of the history from beginning to end? Does it not imply the stages of advance and the periods of reaction? Does it not tell us of the polytheism, which fascinated Israel, and the patience with which the people were trained for

a better faith, and taught to rely no longer on supports which kept them in an infantile condition? The passage is not an isolated one : there are plenty of similar statements which show that the story of Israel is to be read as a story of education through providences, legislators and prophets. It is nowhere better expressed than in the words of the Psalmist—‘Thou leddest thy people like sheep by the hands of Moses and Aaron.’ It was always a leading of the people : they were guided as timid and stupid sheep are guided. True appreciation, therefore, of the story is not shown in seeking to enforce upon Christian people this obligation or that from Jewish law or custom, but in realising that the relationship of God to the people is one which develops in clearness and tenderness from age to age : it is not the obligation of any law which is of importance : it is the realisation of the relationship in which God stands to man. It is the revelation of God as the Guardian and Guide of His people then and always which evokes our faith, because this can do what the bondage of a law cannot do ; it can call forth the appeal of prayer. ‘Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a flock : thou that dwellest between the cherubims shine forth. Before Ephraim, and Benjamin and Manasseh stir up thy strength and come and help us.’

Two Different Tempers of Mind. The whole temper of mind which looks along the line of Old Testament History for the manifestation of the Divine relationship between

God and man differs from that which is bound by a mechanical theory of inspiration. The former is the temper of the child who seeks and finds tokens of a Father's varying but consistent guidance : the latter is that of the legalist who is only content with definite rules. The former is able to set aside with an easy mind and enlightened conscience what was clearly transitory, such as the rules needful for times of imperfectly developed moral sense and immature spiritual apprehension : the latter fails to understand the significance of God's progressive order : the former realises that changed methods may work for the same end : the latter murmurs when the Son of man comes eating and drinking. Briefly it is the difference between the mind which is occupied with principles and the mind which is eager for rules : it is the difference between the love of the spirit and the love of the letter.

The former is the spirit and temper which Christ sought to awaken. He most truly and sincerely saw in the Old Testament the Revelation of His Father ; but He saw it in broad principles, not in specific rules. The latter He did not hesitate to set aside, and in doing so He sanctioned the principles of reasonable historical criticism. He taught that many of the rules laid down in the Mosaic law were temporary, local, and adapted to the ethical condition of the people at a given moment, but by no means universal and abiding. He gave greater force to law by penetrating the shell and liberating the spirit of the commandment : He showed that the righteousness demanded was deeper, more searching than any external obedience :

He accomplished the freedom from the letter at the cost of showing how indispensable and yet how impossible was obedience in the spirit: He brought back the deepened sense of man's dependence upon God by showing the necessity of man's fellowship with God. In other words, He showed that the heart of revelation lay in the manifestation of the relationship between God and man, as the heart of religion lay in a life lived in the consciousness of that relationship.

Christ's Attitude. Take one or two illustrations of the attitude of Christ in these matters. He set aside precepts and commandments of the law: He disregarded legal observances. This is seen in His teaching about uncleanness. According to the ceremonial law, certain meats were unclean, and might not be eaten: Christ taught that the only uncleanness was the moral pollution which came from the heart, and that when the heart was right one meat was as clean as another (Mark vii. 15). Similarly, contact with a leper brought ceremonial uncleanness, but Jesus Christ, who taught His disciples that they might drink unharmed any deadly thing, acted on His own principle, and touched the leper and ignored the question of defilement. He disregarded the Sabbath legalism of His own day. He repealed, as it were, some of the harsh precepts of the old law. 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth' might represent the literal justice of other times, but for such retaliation He substituted the noble commandment of love.

He inaugurated the reign of those principles which in later times brought about the abolition of the sacrificial law, and the discontinuance of the venerable custom so strictly enjoined by the law, the custom of circumcision. In other words, He established principles which automatically sat in judgment upon the old law: He sanctioned that reasonable criticism which enabled men to set aside what was obsolete: His teaching introduced solvents which caused the final perishing of all that was ready to pass away (Heb. viii. 13); and He did all this, though He found in the Old Testament His weapons of defence in the hour of temptation, and the fitting words for His experience in the hour of His suffering. He who found the personal spiritual value of the Old Testament most freely set aside its strictest observances, and in so doing He taught us both what we ought and what we ought not to look for in it: we are not to regard it as a collection of laws of equal value and universal authority: we are to regard it as a record of the steps by which God became known to His people: we are to regard it as a treasury of the experiences of men who were being educated by Him, and who showed, notwithstanding mistakes in their conduct and blemishes in their character, a spirit of unshaken confidence in God, and of heroic devotion to what they deemed to be their duty.

Conclusion. To conclude. We have seen that, notwithstanding theories to the contrary, Christian people have exercised their critical judgment upon portions of the Old

Testament, that the action and attitude of our Lord justified their doing so, that the very principles which He laid down not only sanctioned, but rendered necessary such criticism, while by the application of it the true spiritual value of the Old Testament is not really altered or impaired.

CHAPTER IV

THE BIBLE AND THE LITERATURE OF ISRAEL

The Bible exhibiting the Literature of Israel. The Bible is a collection of writings representing the best literature of the Jewish people. Let us measure the significance of this simple statement of fact.

Value of Literature. Language is a sacred thing. Its sanctity is often disregarded, but its claim to be treated with reverence must be clear to all who think. First, it is the means by which reason can express itself. It is said, indeed, to be the inevitable partner of reason ; so much so, that without language, it is declared, there can be no thought. Without arguing this point, we can realise that thought desires expression, as all living things do. As seed expresses itself in fruit and flower, so thought expresses itself in words. Language, then, is sacred as the vehicle of expression for man's Divine gift of reason. Again, language is sacred, for it is the avenue of communication between man and man. The hidden self in one man finds in language the means of entering into sympathy with the hidden self in another man. Truth in speech, therefore, is the ethical corollary of sincerity of soul. It is the unwritten law of all honour-

able intercourse. To be insincere in speech is to degrade that self which is incarnate in words. It is to do a double dishonour to the self which uses speech and to the self of him who hears it. The real 'I' in speaker and hearer is defrauded and insulted. Hence it was that Christ, realising the sanctity of language as the great self-expressing power, said, 'By thy words thou shalt be justified and by thy words thou shalt be condemned'; and again spoke that stern utterance that 'for every idle word that men should speak they would give account in the Day of Judgment.' Language, therefore, has a claim to be treated with reverence. It is a great revealer and a great persuader. From this conception of the greatness of language we pass to literature.

Literature is the highest expression of which any language is capable. In it we find the embodiment of the greatest and noblest selfhood of a people. We know a people through their literature, as we know men through their words. In it, ultimately, as in a mirror, the soul of the people expresses itself. Great peoples have great literatures.

Witness of this Literature to Religious Consciousness. Now the Bible is a literature. It is a book, if you will; because it is as a single volume that it has been long known among Christian people; but from another point of view, it is no more a single book than *Aikin's British Poets* is. It is a collection of different works, written at different times, under different circumstances, and under

the sense of varying emotions, brought together into one volume. It is a collection of works brought into a certain unity by the historical development which they illustrate, by the growth of religious consciousness which they disclose, and by the spiritual climax to which they inevitably lead. In the Bible we may find illustrations of the literature of the Jewish race in widely-separated periods, and we may trace the evolution of their ethical and spiritual conceptions through a long stretch of time. The Bible, then, is a chronicle of the religious development of the Jewish people. We know in broad outline what the world owes to certain races. We know that we owe philosophy, sculpture and drama to the Greeks. We know that we owe the basis of law and the models of political organisation to the Romans. We know also that, as the Greeks transcended all other races in thought and art, and as the Romans transcended all other races in military and civil rule, so the Jews far outstripped all other peoples in clearness of ethical conception and in loftiness of spiritual vision. The religious consciousness of the Jewish people is as much above that of other races as is the sculpture of the Greeks.

Illustrates Man's Religious Capacity. In the Bible we have the literature of this people, who surpassed all other people in religious sensibility and insight. Now the study of this literature opens to us the study of the deepest and richest treasure of the religious consciousness of mankind. Here that religious consciousness which is found in more

or less advanced development everywhere is met with in its noblest and purest form. Here the spiritual nature of man speaks in the clearest and most harmonious tones. Just as the man who has dwelt among the artistic creations of Greece gains a taste, which makes it impossible for him to admire the products of barbarian art, so the man who has nourished his nature upon the religious writings of the Jewish people realises how far they surpass the levels reached in the religious efforts of other races. He does not indeed despise these : he realises their value from the point of view of historical perspective : they are interesting, instructive, pathetic ; but he has tasted the riper and mellower wine, and he does not desire the raw and crude vintage of other lands.

The claim, then, which the Bible has on the attention of men lies just in this—that setting aside for the moment all theories of inspiration and revelation, it does contain the literature of the most distinctly religious people of the world : in it we find the record of the spiritual consciousness of man as expressed by the race possessed of the highest spiritual organisation. To know what religious message the most religious people gave to the world is for the historical student an interesting study ; but if religion is vital to every man, then to know how religion has found expression among the spiritual leaders of the most spiritually-minded race is a study of personal importance.

Consequent Value of the Bible. It will be understood that in writing thus I am dealing with the question on broad

lines. I do not ignore the difficulties—historical, literary, and ethical—which are encountered by the Bible student: these, however, must be reserved for later consideration. All that I am concerned with now is to show that to Jewish people mankind owes that religious quickening which has profoundly influenced the history and destiny of the world. There is a wide and deep truth in the Psalmist's enthusiastic affirmation—'Out of Zion went forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.' Make allowance for patriotic enthusiasm, the residuum of truth is solid and irrefutable. Roman law is embedded in the foundations of modern European justice, and no less the religious principles which are accepted in the western world are derived from the literature, the sacred writings, of the Jew.

Position of the New Testament Church. For the general purpose of this argument, we have a right to treat the Old and New Testaments as parts of one collection of religious literature. The writers of the New Testament were as certainly men of Jewish race as were the writers of the Old Testament. We may, however, with another thought in mind, separate for a moment the New Testament from the Old; and we may then draw out another argument.

The world of to-day is greatly exercised concerning the origins of Christianity. What is the New Testament? We may allow for disputed questions of date, for the difficulties of the Synoptic problem, for the controversies about the pastoral epistles; but if we want to know any-

thing about the primitive Church, we must turn to the New Testament. The position taken up by the Churches of the Reformation does not appear, as it seems to me, to have given way before recent assaults. If we are to be guided by the action, teaching and custom of the primitive Church, we must resort to the New Testament. In appealing to it we are appealing to the judgment of the Apostolic Church. The word Church is ambiguous and misleading. No serious-minded writer ought to use the word without some clear and defining adjective; but if we want to know the mind of the Church, as it is called, in the purest and best times, before the healing and wholesome influence of the spirit of Christ's word had begun to ebb away, before heated disputes about intellectual forms of thought had transformed personal faith into mere, and alas! unethical, correctness of opinion, then we must inquire what is the witness of those who were the spiritual leaders of the true Catholic and Apostolic Church. Thus as a factor, a decisive factor in the great problem of the nature of early Christianity, the New Testament demands our most patient and persistent study.

CHAPTER V

SOME WORDS ON POETRY AND PROSE

Poetry and Prose. I have spoken of the Bible as a great and important collection of Jewish literature. I desire now to note one or two points which will show the snares which the student of this, and indeed of all literature, needs to avoid.

Words as Snares. Bacon gave us an admirable caution about language. Men believe that reason is lord over their words, but words often usurp lordship over reason. Reason is indeed the constitutional monarch, and words should be but his subjects and messengers doing his bidding, but the messengers often fail to convey the full or clear meaning of their sovereign's message. Listeners, too, are entrapped in the words, partly because, with all its sacredness and value, language is but an imperfect vehicle of thought, partly also because in reaching the hearer's mind the message has to pass through a medium coloured with predisposing ideas, and it reaches the mind arrayed in false or faulty hues; and there are few listeners who have cultivated the habit of asking what is the meaning, the intended meaning of the message. Words, said Hobbes, are the counters of wise men, but the money of fools; and

unfortunately the bulk of men treat words as money—attaching the value to the word, rather than the meaning, resting on the symbol, not on the thing signified. For such the letter killeth. It is the spirit only that giveth life.

Form and Substance. This is only a way of repeating the obvious truths that the reader of literature must be prepared to distinguish between form and substance, between the truth stated and the garment or literary form in which it is clad. The same thought, for example, may be expressed in various ways. ‘No pains, no gains,’ enshrines the same principle as the familiar words, ‘He that loveth his life shall lose it.’ The same truth may be uttered directly and indirectly: it may be presented to us under allegorical or logical, under lyrical or historical form. Hence the reader of the Bible needs to ask under what form is this which he is reading presented to him? It is not too much to say that a very large proportion of what are called Bible difficulties would never have existed had Western readers realised the tendency to highly poetical and allegorical forms which was so natural to the Jewish writers. It is still more true to say that perhaps fifty per cent. of the hotly-contested controversial questions which have divided Christian people would never have raised dispute had Christian writers and commentators understood the genius of the Jewish people, or realised how readily bold, striking and often revolting imagery was accepted, without the least chance of misunderstanding by

Jewish minds. By these the early chapters of Genesis were recognised as allegorical, to be studied only by those of mature years. The Western commentator too often turned poetry into prose, and out of his prosaic misunderstanding developed a heresy. 'We shall eat the Messiah' was a current image among the Jews. No materialistic notion was associated with it. It was a pregnant expression of the new vigour, gladness and satisfaction which the Messiah would bring. And yet, when our Lord accepted the current speech and adopted it as His own, it was made the basis of a series of semi-pagan and materialistic theories, which always exercise a fascination over natures to which ethical conceptions are difficult. Among the Jews who heard Christ speak the idea which Western minds read into His words never had a place. When they asked, 'How can this man give us His flesh to eat?' they were not stumbling at the thought of eating a man's flesh—that was a notion with which they were quite familiar—but they were stumbling at the claim which Christ seemed to make of being that Messiah on whom all faithful Jews hoped to feed. The emphasis of their thought was on the word 'this man.' 'How can this man do what only the Messiah can do—give us His flesh to eat?'

Poetical Narrative and Narrative Poetry. Readers go astray then who read the Bible in a dull and literal spirit, and who view all parts of it as belonging to one class of writing. Such fail to discriminate between imagery

and fact, between truth and the poetical expression of truth ; and they often therefore lose the spiritual lesson which becomes all the more forcible because embodied in some picturesque and vivid form. Now, how many readers have stumbled over the story of Jonah ? But how few have paused to ask whether the book lies among the historical or poetical books of the Old Testament ! The realisation of a poetical or allegorical element in certain parts of the Bible would not only dissipate some needless difficulties, but it would make clear the ethical teaching ; and in its turn the vivid apprehension of the ethical teaching entirely restores to us the sense of just proportion, and enables us to realise both how small importance attaches to the drapery of an incident and also how natural under the circumstances is the drapery which the writer has used. In two highly idealised narratives—that of Balaam and of Jonah—this is the case. If we only seize the ethical drift of the story, we can recognise the psychological conditions which led to the stories being presented in the form which they have assumed. The dull distinction between the natural and the supernatural is felt to disappear. The heart of the story is left untouched. The Prophet Jonah who refuses to carry out the Divine message finds that the very forces of nature conspire to compel him. The Prophet Balaam, who is eager to follow gain against the protest of his own conscience, finds on every step of the way incidents which emphasise his own misgivings. Dumb things are eloquent for the right. The stars in their courses fight against

wrong. Is it wonderful that beasts and fishes, as well as winds and waves, yea, all the powers which beat round the lives of men, should be felt to be active agents in the divinely-appointed order of things? If to the Psalmist's mind 'day unto day uttered speech,' is it very wonderful that another sacred writer should describe the dumb ass as rebuking the madness of the prophet? Men deeply alive to the close contact of the Divine with human life must not be censured if they sometimes write as men who are more concerned to show that the Divine voice speaks than careful to explain how it speaks. Minds so full of the consciousness of Divine realities express themselves in that large poetry of style which is the despair or the snare of prosaic natures. The religious teaching, as Professor G. A. Smith has said more than once, is frequently independent of the historical incident. History often teaches religion; but religion can be taught in sermon, in poem and in fable as well as in history.

CHAPTER VI

SOME METHODS OF INTERPRETATION

Importance of Right Interpretation. The interpretation of the Bible is as important as the Bible itself. The Bible, like any other book, or indeed like any other fact, may be interpreted rightly or wrongly. A perverse ingenuity may misconstrue passages: a partisan spirit may divert them from their true meaning. We have had abundant illustrations of these methods. Passages which were only local and personal have been brought forward as though universally true.

Examples. Some examples will illustrate this confusion. Thus the description given by Isaiah in chap. i. has been read as though it were a dogmatic description of the moral condition of man and men at all times. It is quite true that the moral condition set forth by Isaiah has been reproduced often enough in human history: his words, therefore, may be taken as typical, but not as dogmatic and final declarations. Again Isa. xxxiii. 1-14, which gives a vivid picture of a country devastated by an invading army, has been treated as though it were a doctrinal statement of eternal perdition. Matt. xvi. 18, a passage of doubtful meaning, has been given an interpretation un-

known to any of the great fathers of the Church, and made the foundation of claims which have been the fertile source of division. Words like those of our Lord in Matt. xx. 16 have been robbed of their natural force and pressed into the service of controversies which have darkened men's thoughts of God.

Single-minded Study needful. The Bible has been misinterpreted, and this has frequently been due to certain dogmatic predispositions in the minds of controversialists. The simple souls who have been content to seek for spiritual sustenance have not gone far astray. The honest, wayfaring man, however unsophisticated, has seldom greatly erred therein. Unfortunately, however, the persistent reiteration of misinterpretation has too often successfully misled men: false impressions once created are difficult to dislodge. I wish, therefore, here to make one or two remarks on certain mistaken ideas which often give rise to misinterpretations of the Bible.

Mischief of Supplemental Imagination. It is in every way a mistake—I might use a stronger term—to fill up the Bible silences with imaginary material, and then to use this imaginary material as though it governed the interpretation of the existing narrative. There is one very common example of this practice. We all remember the forty days which we are told our Lord spent on earth after His resurrection. This forty days is dismissed in a very few verses the material of narrative

and statement is scanty and brief. It is practically one of the Bible silences. This silence is seized upon by doctrinal theorists. Every dogma which they desire to see included in the Christian creed: every practice which they think should be observed in the Christian society: every portion of organisation or order which they imagine to be indispensable to their own theory of Church government: is roundly declared to have been sanctioned by the Lord Himself during this period. That there is not the faintest scintilla of evidence for any of these statements does not appear to distress or to disturb the minds of these eager dogmatists. Such and such a thing ought to have place in the Church: it is not to be found otherwise: we shall therefore place the time and source of its authority in this silent period. Against this practice we cannot protest too strongly. It must be clear to everybody who reflects, that if the silences can be lawfully filled up by dogmatic imagination, the way is open to the wildest fancy, and a chaos of opinions must be the result. But another reflection is more important. There is one sound principle which candid and truth-loving men will at once accept. No human being has a right to affirm that to be a fact which he does not know to be a fact. No self-respecting person will place the creations of his imagination on the same plane as that occupied by simple fact. To fill up the silence of the Gospel narrative by the exercise of imagination may sometimes be helpful to enable us to realise the progress of the story, but when this is done it should be done as imagination, and it

should be carefully separated from fact. But to fill up the silences with statements of dogmas and theories declared to be of fundamental importance is, and only can be, not merely dishonest, but cruelly dishonourable. We can prove any nonsense out of the Bible if we allow our imagination to fill up the gaps. We can unchurch everybody but ourselves if we supply the silent spaces of the Scripture with our own neat and narrow dogmatism. Nothing must be allowed as legitimate interpretation which cannot show positive evidence from the real text of the Bible. Statements which are made on the strength of some hypothetical revelations, which there is and can be no evidence that our Lord ever gave, must be summarily dismissed, not merely as unproven but as impertinent. Whatever was of real moment in our Lord's teaching in those forty days finds a place, we may be sure, in the New Testament. If it is not to be found there, it must be proved by the ordinary methods of establishing other historical facts. If it cannot be so proved, it must be set aside as the product of empty fancy.

Contemporary Explanations not Authoritative. There is another caution respecting interpretations which deserves a word. In the course of our Bible study we meet not only narratives of certain events which took place, and certain phenomena which were observed, but also with the contemporary interpretation of the event or of the phenomenon. The judicious student will not feel bound to accept the writer's interpretation of every-



thing which he narrates. In fact, phenomenon or event is one thing, the interpretation which the narrator puts upon these is quite another. In his interpretation he is limited by the knowledge current in his age. We may put the matter this way. We moderns, seeing such phenomena, would not describe them as the ancients did. This would not mean that we discredited the fact of or existence of the phenomena, but that being what we are, and knowing what we know, we must describe them in one way, whereas the earlier writers, no less honest than ourselves, being what they were, and knowing what they knew, were constrained to describe them as they did.

Let us take a single example. In John v. (the authenticity of the passage is of no moment to this argument) we read that the stirring of the waters and the consequent healing virtue was attributed to the presence of an angel. The modern would speak of the pool as a medicinal spring. The fact is the same. The mode of description is different. The ancient knew little of what are called natural causes. We are not bound to accept or adopt the theory of a special angel visit. The devout mind will, however, realise that the natural spring of healing virtue is just as truly of God as any angel visitor.

Is the Question of Credibility affected? The principle that we are not always bound to accept the contemporary interpretation of matters recorded in the Bible gives rise, however, to another question which need not detain us

long. The question is this—‘How far does the acceptance of the standards of ignorance current in the past invalidate the teaching authority of great religious leaders?’ Probably most people will answer, ‘Not in the slightest degree. The religious teacher is not concerned with any other region than the ethical or spiritual. He does not claim scientific knowledge; and it is as absurd to speak of his scientific ignorance invalidating his authority as it is to suppose that Phidias is a worse sculptor because he knew nothing of the law of gravitation.’ We shall all feel that there is a measure of truth and a ground of reason in this reply. St. Paul is not less a religious psychologist because he is no astronomer, and Isaiah is no less a prophet because he knows nothing of evolution.

The Case of our Lord. But notwithstanding the basis of good sense in this reply, we must allow that many who would admit its justice in regard to Isaiah and St. Paul feel some hesitation in applying it in the case of our Lord. Unfortunately on the side which defends as well as on the side which attacks the authority of Jesus Christ there has been a radical agreement on this question. Both sides have sought, and they have shown a striking harmony in seeking, to establish a dilemma. The dilemma is put forward somewhat in this fashion. Either Jesus Christ knew or He did not know the great laws of the universe. If He did know, He is open to the charge of allowing people to continue in great and harmful errors: if He did

not know, what becomes of the claim that He is one with God? It will be seen that the reply to this dilemma would require not a chapter, but a treatise. It is not in my power to enter into any exhaustive investigation here ; but I ask the reader to consider the following observations. It seems to me a pity that either on one side or the other this question is raised, and that the history is not read as a history, belonging to its own age and coloured by its prevalent scientific or unscientific ideas. Jesus Christ lived in a certain period : He is to appear as a true man in that age : it must be as one accepting the ideas of that age that He appears, except, of course, in the spiritual questions in which His mission is concerned. What was the measure or limit of His acquaintance with matters outside the sphere of His mission does not in the least concern us. It is as one with a specific mission that He comes. The only question of importance is about the way in which He fulfilled it. If the doctor comes to attend the sick, he is not fulfilling his mission if he descants upon the artistic qualities of Michelangelo and Raffaele. Can we not imagine that the importance of fulfilling His work and of not going beyond it was realised by Him who said, ' My meat is to do the will of my Father and to finish his work.' Our speculations concerning how much He knew or did not know of other matters is surely irrelevant and profitless.

Exemplified in Question of Demonology. But all minds have not thought so, and some are uneasy as long as ques-

tions, such as these, once put, are not answered. As space forbids more, I propose to deal with the question in one instance only. The example which I select is sufficiently pertinent to be capable of being treated as typical. Moreover, the example is one which has furnished material for lengthy debate. I take the case of what is called demoniacal possession. It is the subject on which the late Professor Huxley showed such a keen interest. According to him, 'belief in a demon's world is inculcated throughout the Gospel.' 'This conception,' he says, 'is fundamental for the authors of the Gospel' (*Science and Christian Tradition*, p. xiv.). We may admit that the writers of the New Testament did ascribe certain evil things to the malignant influence of strange spirits: they accepted the current explanations of the age, and they were not different from their contemporaries in their belief in demonology. In this sense, therefore, that the authors did not and could not escape the crude notions of their time, we may admit that the conception is 'fundamental for the authors of the Gospel.' But we are not therefore bound to admit that such a conception is fundamental for ourselves: we must be strangely constituted indeed if we imagine that we are bound to accept the scientific ideas of the authors of the Gospel as an integral part of the idea of the Gospel. Demonological ideas were no doubt fundamental conceptions in the gospels, but they are not fundamental ideas of the Gospel; and it is surely straining the language of narrative very far to

say that such conceptions are 'inculcated' in the gospels. No doubt they are taken for granted: under the conditions of the time they could not be otherwise, but this is a very different thing from saying that such ideas are taught as essential to the true conception of the Gospel itself.

The Real Issue thus raised. We must not, however, shirk the real difficulty. The real difficulty does not lie in the conception of the Evangelists, but in the attitude of Jesus Christ towards the current demonological ideas.

Now there are, as far as I can see, only three suppositions which are possible on this subject.

1. Either Jesus Christ knew that the evils described were due to the agency of evil spirits;
2. Or He knew that the current conceptions were mistaken but He did not think it to be wise, or a part of His mission, to correct misapprehensions on the matter;
3. Or He Himself was truly limited in His knowledge of this matter, and in accepting the limitations of humanity He accepted the limitations of knowledge which bound humanity at the time.

If the first supposition be true, there is an end of the question.

If the second be true, Jesus Christ appears acting as every wise teacher would act in refusing to attempt to correct misapprehensions on matters which were outside the range of His mission, and the discussion of which

would only serve to divert men's attention, carrying their minds to side issues away from His main purpose.

If the third supposition be the true one, then it only means that Jesus Christ in accepting the limitations of humanity accepted the limitations which marked the scientific knowledge of His own day.

One or other of these three suppositions must be true. Does the acceptance of any one of these—no matter which—affect the veracity of the Gospel narrative or the authority of Jesus Christ in spiritual matters? I think not. The question, it is to be remembered, is not whether the theory of demoniacal possession be true, but whether, assuming that certain phenomena were in the Gospel days ascribed to demoniacal influence, the general facts (apart from the correctness or otherwise of current interpretations) are invalidated by any one of the three answers given above.

CHAPTER VII

THE GROWTH OF THE BIBLE

The Bible a Growth. To appreciate the message of the Old Testament, we ought to have an intelligent idea of its formation. We must realise that it is a growth. One false notion may at once be dismissed. The books of the Old Testament did not spring into existence ready made. There is this distinction between the Bible and some other so-called sacred books. The Bible is not, as they claim to be, an instantaneous and complete gift : the Bible is a growth : the Old Testament specially is a growth. The Koran and the Book of Mormon claim, I believe, to be ready-made revelations, given at one fixed moment to some specially-called prophet. The Old Testament attained its present form in the process of time.

Growth shown in Formation of the Canon. It will be desirable here to say a few words about the formation of the Canon. The Old Testament consists, as we know, of a certain number of books ; but it is well that we should have some clear, if general, notions of the way in which the component parts, as we have them, came together. There is a word much used which is perhaps

a needful one, but which conveys, I fear, a mistaken conception. We hear of the Canon of Scripture, the formation of the Canon, the Canonical books of the Bible, etc. There is a very real meaning in the word and its application to the Bible ; but its value depends upon our taking the word in its true sense. Let me remark again that the best things grow, and the testing or measuring rod which does best service in estimating values is the rod of time. There is no infallible and inspired authority, local or dogmatic, to test or measure the value of the books of the Old or New Testament : the felt value of the books themselves tested by lapse of time and by variety of experience has, more than any formal authority, established their canonicity : it is true that this verdict of time and experience has been expressed more than once by certain ecclesiastical bodies or assemblies, but behind these formal statements is the verdict of experience : the acclamation of souls established the canonical value of the books before the verdict was endorsed by what may be described as an official sanction.

This, which is according to the natural course of things, gives a deepened interest to our study of the books themselves. There are books which come to us from very ancient times : they are linked together by a common bond : they are not only books which have survived the ravages of time : they are books which have been given a high and special place in men's reverence and esteem, not from any mere authoritative declaration of their Divine

character, but from the unquestionable claim of their direct and real usefulness to the hearts of men.

From what I have said it will be clear that we must dismiss from our minds any mechanical theories of the formation of the Canon. We must not, for instance, imagine that these books of the Bible are bound together by the tie of a common epoch: as they touch various epochs of time, so also their admission to a place in the Canon was various and gradual. We must not regard the Canon as a rule or test exercised in one place and at one time: it is rather the word which expresses the fact that certain books contained a note of religious force which lifted them above other literature. The value of this religious force was, of course, not according to our estimate but according to the estimate of the men of bygone times.

There is no historical account of the formation of the Old Testament Canon. The legends which assign it to the action of Ezra or the judgment of 'The Great Synagogue' may be set aside as having no solid foundation. We must dismiss legend: we must examine the books themselves.

But here it is important to bear in mind that the unique reverence yielded by the Jews to the books of the Old Testament indicates that these books were possessed of a religious character, and that it was in consequence of the recognition of this religious character that they were given the position they occupied. There were other books not so revered: and the books now regarded

as sacred held a place in the literature of the people before they were lifted into a place in the Canon.

Stages of Growth. The Bishop of Exeter, whose work on the Old Testament Canon is of special value on this subject, indicates three stages through which the books may be said to have passed :—

1. The Elemental Stage in which the general component parts of the books were formed.
2. The Medial Stage in which they were reduced to their present literary form.
3. The Final Stage in which they were selected as worthy of a place in the National Canon.

We cannot follow out these stages in detail. We have, in the mere statement given to us by so able an expert, the clear affirmation of the principle of growth.

To the thoughtful mind, growth does not rob from the Old Testament the value of its Revelation. On the contrary, it is in the process of growth that the value and significance of its Revelation are most clearly seen. The idea that whatever grows is meaningless and whatever is instantaneously made shows marks of design belongs to the obsolete way of thinking. The message that is spelt out to us letter by letter is as clear as the message written in an instant upon the wall before our eyes; and the former method is more truly in harmony with the Divine order than the latter. The best things grow, disclosing their meaning and beauty with a coy dilatoriness, but thus unfolding the fulness of their significance

the more effectually. The joy of the harvest and the delight in a completed statue or in an accomplished task arise from the experiences encountered in the various stages which led up to the end. Unintelligent impatience may ask for immediate and complete information : wisdom is content with slow unfoldings : it likes to make sure of its ground step by step : it loves to mark slow development : 'here a little and there a little : line upon line : precept upon precept' : there was sagacity in the prophet's message, though he, like those who followed him, was derided in his day because he eschewed brilliant falsehoods and clung to simple but fundamental principles whose force disclosed itself gradually. Growth and development are in fact nobler and safer modes of revelation than those of dazzling suddenness. Instantaneous revelations, like most ready-made things, frequently fit badly. If God unfolds His order in Nature by slow degrees, it will not surprise us that His revelations to the religious consciousness of mankind should be gradual also.

General Process of Growth. We can only briefly indicate in some of its aspects the process of growth which influenced the formation of the Old Testament. The Jewish people, like all other people of intellectual force, had a literature. The Jewish literature grew according to the same laws and methods as the literature of other nations. Doubtless, certain characteristic differences may be pointed out in the details of the literary development of differing races, but in broad outline in-

tellectual growth of every kind pursues the same course among all peoples. Old songs and old legends are found in the early stages. The heroic deed, the impressive discovery, or the providential averting of some imminent peril, have been celebrated in song or story and then passed down from mouth to mouth : enthusiasm, joy and imagination have incorporated the incident or exploit in song, in glad or triumphant verse, or stirring tale, and these commemorative tributes of popular delight, at one time fugitive, became in a later age incorporated into history, chronicle, or even legal code. We find many of these ancient songs—some of them of unknown authorship and unknown date—imbedded in the Old Testament. The Song of the Sword (Gen. iv. 23, 24); the Song of Moses (Exod. xv. 1); the Song of Deborah (Judges v.); David's lament over Saul (2 Sam. i. 19-27). These songs were to illustrate history perhaps, but they are not to be mistaken for history : they possess the ardour of poetical compositions : they are enthusiastic : they paint with imaginative touches : they idealise : they use the language of hyperbole : they employ, probably all unconsciously, those arts by which the soul speaks to the soul. To read them with a coldly critical spirit is to do an injustice to them and to ourselves.

Legends in the same way, half poetry and half prose : narratives, that is, told in the simple fashion of men anxious to preserve the memory of some great event and impressive experience, and told therefore with that simplicity which uses imagery freely and naturally,

narratives often repeated, and therefore appearing in more or less different forms, belong to the literary dawn of all nations. These narratives take their place in the later chronicles, and become also a sort of common stock on which the prophet and moralist draw for example and illustration.

Growth through Custom and Law. Again, as a people becomes organised, they are governed by customs which have grown up as questions have been raised and disputes have been settled. The head of a family, or the chief of a tribe, has given a decision on some quarrel: his decision is taken as a precedent and is made to govern later questions: customs thus grow up having the force of laws. This process would apply alike to social and to religious matters. When we take up the story of Israel we take up the story of a branch of the great Semitic people at a time when certain customs have become accepted among them. The laws, social and religious, which we have in the Old Testament are the record of the laws or customs which grew up in different periods designed to modify or to confirm prior ancient customs. It is important to remember this fact. We may be tempted to judge harshly some of the provisions of the Pentateuch, unless we recollect that the law which shocks us may have been an attempt to mitigate some earlier and more cruel custom. It is important to observe that in all progressive civilisations there is a gradual softening of severe customs.

The history of society nearly always follows this tendency from harsher to gentler laws or customs. The severe customs were dictated by the necessity of self-preservation. Lynch law is a wild, barbarous method of justice. To hang a man for horse-stealing appears to us a punishment out of all proportion to the offence, till we remember that the severe punishment arose among settlers to whom the horse was the life, and to steal the horse might mean leaving the settler to starvation. We ought to be slow to blame men for severe laws till we have put ourselves in their place. The true outlook is that of the student who notices that as society becomes organised and the conditions of life more settled the severity of laws is relaxed. This humane tendency is one of the features of the Jewish law. In point of mercy and gentleness it ranks high among the laws of peoples. A belief in God as 'loving mercy' enters very early into the code.

Religious or ceremonial laws are of two kinds. (1.) Ceremonial laws which are only sanitary laws conveyed under a religious form in order that they might be the more carefully observed, or perhaps as recognising that everything which contributed to social welfare was a part of religion. (2.) Ceremonial laws which did not concern social life as such, but only dealt with matters of worship. These as we have them in the Old Testament are the accumulations of time. The rudimentary stages of these laws belong to prehistoric times: certain religious ceremonies were derived from the customs of ancestors who lived before the time of Moses or even of Abraham: the

ceremonial laws which we find in the Pentateuch represent the successive historical modifications of these laws. In other words, the laws in the Pentateuch are not a complete or uniform code : they are rather the accumulations of generations. We must view them as we would a section of ground belonging to an ancient city which discloses to us relics of successive dynasties and epochs, or even of successive civilisations. They express, therefore, successive experiences : they disclose modes of thought which carry the characteristics of varying ages : they betray the fluctuations of ethical feeling : they are, in this sense, profoundly interesting psychological studies. They serve to illustrate certain tendencies of human nature and the landmarks which distinguish the moral and spiritual advance of that remarkable race which more than any other has ministered to the religious consciousness of mankind.

Progressive and Retrogressive Forces. The value of these studies to ourselves depends upon our recognition of two facts, viz., the unquestionable moral advance of mankind, and the equally unquestionable deteriorating influence in human history.

Concerning the moral progress of mankind we can have little doubt : rough and severe laws tend to disappear : gentler and humaner methods slowly prevail. Or, to put it in another way, the age in which the laws of Christ are possible is far in advance of the age of mere ceremonial laws ; and equally the age which yearns to accept the laws

of Christ is in advance of the age which rejected, because it could not understand Him. But we shall miss the lesson of continuous study if we fail to observe the way in which noble ideas and great moral principles are robbed of their life-force in the process of time. A great idea, a fine commemorative custom, a clear ethical doctrine, may be degraded into empty formula, superstitious ceremony or dry and profitless notion. The student needs to keep in mind the profound saying of Mr. Edward Caird—‘the idea creates the organisation : the organisation destroys the idea.’

Modern teachers are sometimes disposed to ridicule the doctrine, so dear to the leaders of the Evangelical movement, of the depravity of human nature ; but we must be blind indeed to facts if we do not realise that in the moral and spiritual world as well as in the material world there is a moth and a rust which can corrupt. The changes which we resent and distrust are often Divine methods of progress, used for human benefit lest the thing which is good might become an influence for evil, and

‘One good custom should corrupt the world.’

We cannot within our limits illustrate this largely from Israelitish story ; but we may remember that our Lord reproached the men of His day for the way in which they had, by their traditions, demoralised certain great and noble ancestral principles. He used even stronger language than this : He accused them of rejecting the counsel of God that they might keep their own traditions.

In the face of this fact we need not wonder if, when we place in historical groups the Jewish laws, we detect, along with an advance, a decline also in ethical perception. Hence what we should expect is what we find in the Bible. It is the record of a slow advance in revelation of truth and in spiritual perception : it is a slow advance, but it is an advance which is not regular : it is an advance marked by periods of retrogression as well as periods of progression : it is an advance marked by the features characteristic of all progress : the tide comes in, but its progress is accompanied by receding as well as advancing waves. The advance indeed can seldom be measured by the actors at any period : so little are they able to gauge the progress that they are often the victims of despair : evil seems too strong : the recoiling waves sweep away so much : the strongest of the prophets are often despondent.

But, and here is a noteworthy feature, the note of despondency which so frequently meets us in the Old Testament never sounds so despairingly in the New Testament. There is among the New Testament writers a recurring strain of confidence : they write as men inured to and expectant of suffering, but as men convinced of victory. The progress which prophets hoped for these men are sure of. Their eyes behold the light which shines across the dark, and they hail it as men hail the dawn, nothing doubting but that the night and the things of the night are destined to pass away.

Something clearly has entered into their lives to give them this confidence : they are not any longer inquisitive

about the future : they are so well assured of the victory of good, that they are content with present service, knowing that their work is not in vain. Men ask whether God has not more light to break forth : they speak as though some fresh revelation of His will were needed ; but it was not thus that apostles spoke : they spoke as men who feel that God's last word had been said, as though the revelation was complete, when God in these last days had spoken by His Son. No doubt there are many questions we are tempted to ask : there are still problems which perplex our minds ; but if we recognise the full significance of the revelation in Christ we shall realise that we have enough in it to occupy our thoughts and our lives. Men have not yet learned Christ, and perchance till they have learned Him it is as well that they should be left with this task. Perchance it is only when we have learned Him that we shall be fitted for the future revelation of God.

CHAPTER VIII

THE IDEA OF GOD IN ISRAEL

The Conception of God of more Moment than Details of History. Once we have realised the principle of growth, we perceive that the growth of ideas may form a method of revelation. The revelation of God lies in the discovery to men of His nature and character. The revelation of God, therefore, which is disclosed in the Old Testament is really independent of the subsidiary questions of ethnology and geography, still more of matters of minor interpretation. The conceptions of God which meet us in the history of Israel are higher than those which prevailed among other peoples: the superiority of these conceptions is indisputable and of measurelessly greater moment than the questions whether certain narratives are the stories of the individual or the tribe.

Monotheism in Israel. For instance, Israel became a sternly Monotheistic people. We scarcely realise the full significance and importance of the fact. We use the phrase: we accept the idea: but we form no notion of the stupendous revolution which is accomplished when a people advances from Polytheism to Monotheism—from the recognition of many deities to the worship of one living God.

When our Lord spoke His words concerning the first and great commandment, He prefaced them by quoting, 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one God.' It was the indispensable prelude of what followed. The realisation of the great commandment of Love would have been impossible on other than a Monotheistic basis. This foundation thought Israel reached, and reached in a way which constitutes a remarkable fact in the history of man's religious consciousness.

The Semitic Family Polytheistic. For a moment we must remember that Israel belonged to the great Semitic family. This family possessed certain characteristics which distinguished them from other branches of the human family, but there was one belief which they shared with other races, viz., the belief in the existence of many deities. Like the Aryan race, the Semites were Polytheists. Space does not allow me to enlarge upon this fact. I am aware that more than one eminent scholar—Renan, for example—has endeavoured to show that a disposition towards Monotheism displayed itself in the whole Semitic family. But as it appears to me the weight of facts is in the opposite direction, and the best expert opinion is being slowly ranged against it. The Polytheism of the Semites, however, is an admitted fact, and if there were, as Professor George Adam Smith expresses it, opportunities for Monotheism open to the Semites, there seems to be very little doubt that, with the single and unique exception of Israel, every branch of the Semitic family clung to its

Polytheistic religion. Thus Israel, however strongly Monotheism exhibited itself later, sprang from a Polytheistic stock. Further, reversion to old worship was a constant fault in Israel. The strongest language and the sternest reproaches of the Prophets, as all readers of the Old Testament will remember, are directed against the worship of Baalim, or the gods of the Semitic race. In fact, two tendencies are seen at work in the history of Israel—one backward to Polytheism, the other forward towards an ever-strengthening Monotheism. Israel is seen struggling in the grasp of two contending forces: ancient customs and beliefs, aided by the influence of surrounding peoples, pulling the people downward: prophets of the Lord urging them upward to purer conceptions and a more ethical faith.

The Monotheism of Israel related to their History. We notice also one other significant fact. The Prophets, while insisting on Monotheistic conceptions, never represent themselves as the advocates of a new faith: their appeal is to the past: the faith they plead for is a faith to which Israel is pledged by ancient memories and by solemn covenant: they cannot be represented merely or solely as leaders of advancing thought: they ask the people to look back: the postulate of their appeal is some great and critical period of past history. The Monotheistic faith was not, according to prophets, of yesterday: they did not come to abolish or to change, but to renew Israel's faith, and to bring the people back to the times of an old-stand-

ing covenant. God was faithful to the covenant, as the Psalmist expresses it—‘He hath remembered his covenant for ever, the word which he commanded to a thousand generations’ (Ps. cv. 8), or as the Prophet says, ‘But thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend. Thou whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called from the chief men thereof, and said unto thee, Thou art my servant; I have chosen thee and not cast thee away’ (Isa. xli. 8, 9). Even though Israel sinned, and went after strange gods, God Himself never forgot the covenant. ‘He remembered for them his covenant, and repented according to the multitude of his mercies’ (Ps. cvi. 45). Cf. Micah vii. 20. Israel’s sin then was not merely in wrongdoing and in going after other gods, but in forsaking the covenant of God (Jer. xi. 6-8, xxxi. 31-33; Judges ii. 1-13). This covenant holds a prominent place in the thoughts of the great ethical teachers of Israel. It is in their view a great fact interwoven with the history of Israel. Without it Israel would not be the Israel entitled to the hope and confidence which according to the Prophets she can always claim.

What is the Period of Historical Crisis. To what period do the Prophets then refer? What is that great critical event which brought with it such a determining influence in the after history of the people? Here again we reach a most important question. Observe a covenant is not as a rule one-sided. Protection on one side implies

obedience on the other ; but this relationship of protection on one side and obedience on the other may exist without any very high or abiding moral results. Obedience to a protecting national or tribal God might only involve ceremonial or external worship : it might make no demand on character : it might not establish any ethical standard whatever. But the conceptions of the Prophets of Israel are persistently ethical : the idea of the covenant which they put forward is one which does make a demand on character : mere ceremonial obedience is often treated with scorn.

‘Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old?’

‘Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?’

‘He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good ; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?’ (Micah vi. 6-8).

Similar is the language of the covenant Psalm (Ps. l. 9, 10). It is not the sacrifice of the bullock or lamb that is wanted : it is the sacrifice of a grateful heart and an upright life. The Lord of Israel’s covenant was the righteous Lord : the covenant with Israel involved a measure of ethical sympathy with the Lord who loved righteousness. No doubt some of the passages I have

cited belong to a period when the ethical sense in Israel had reached a comparatively advanced stage of development, but they imply that in the original covenant with Israel some germ of ethical thought and ethical requirement existed: the bond between God and Israel was not a non-moral one.

The Period of the Exodus. When we ask whether the Prophets look back to any specific period from which to date as it were the recognition of this covenant, we find a constant recurrence of the thought of the Exodus. Egypt and the deliverance from the bondage of Egypt: the Exodus and a period of wandering in the wilderness under the leadership of Moses and Aaron: these form the subject of frequent allusion, as we know, alike in Prophet and Psalmist. The Psalms which celebrate the Exodus and the wilderness (Ps. cv. and cvi.) refer to an acknowledged covenant, brought into special notice and involving loyal obedience on the part of Israel. 'He remembered his holy promise, and Abraham his servant, and he brought forth his people with joy and his chosen with gladness: and gave them the lands of the heathen: and they inherited the labour of the people; that they might observe his statutes and keep his laws' (Ps. cv. 42-45). Cf. Hosea xii. 9, xiii. 4.

It is in fact to the Mosaic period that these writers look back. Cf. Ps. lxxvii. 16-20, lxxviii. 10-12, lxxx. 8; Amos ii. 10, iii. 1, and this is now generally admitted by students. Budde, for instance (*The Religion*

of *Israel up to the Exile*), traces the moral influence of Israel's acceptance of Jehovah as its God, and of its reliance upon the promises made through Moses: he shows that the confidence of Israel in the fidelity of Jehovah tended to produce self-examination: no doubt of the power of God's power was felt: when things went badly, the question arose, 'Wherein have I deserved the displeasure of Jehovah?' In such questioning there lies a power of ethical advance. 'The germ of this whole development,' says Professor Budde, 'took place at Sinai.' Similarly Kuenen, who is not inclined to concede too great a moral influence to the Mosaic period, yet acknowledges that some seeds of moral capacity, as it were, must have been sown thus early in Israel's history. In the same way Professor G. A. Smith points out that the faith of Israel did not rest upon a mere physical bond between the people and Jehovah: the bond was not simply, as in native religions, the bond of material sustenance: it was a bond of history and of providence. Jehovah had not always been the God of Israel, but 'He found them at a crisis of their history and offered His help in return for their obedience' (p. 137). Thus, as Professor G. A. Smith says, 'Among modern critics there is virtual unanimity in carrying back the origin of Israel's ethical distinction to the time of Moses and in regarding him as its instrument' (p. 136).

The Revelation of God. Thus, leaving aside the question as to the conception of God possessed by the

earlier patriarchs, we are led to the conclusion that at the Mosaic period there occurred some remarkable crisis in Israel's history. At that time something took place which profoundly influenced the thought, the imagination, and, what is more important, the character of the people. Now, when we examine the books of the Bible, simply with the view of ascertaining what was the nature of this influence, we find that the crisis, whatever it was, is constantly associated with the thought of God. Whatever was done, it was God that did it, and whenever it was done, God had at that time drawn near in a special way to Israel: He had made Himself known to them. In what way? we ask. We may be tempted to say, In the way of a great deliverance: it was in the great national emancipation of the Exodus that God was made known to Israel. This is, no doubt, a thought which we meet with frequently enough in the literature of Israel—'With a mighty hand and with a stretched out arm' God brought them out. But every careful observer will feel that the thoughts of the Prophets and Psalmists go much deeper than this. They celebrate the triumph of the Exodus with reiterated joy, but when God made Himself known to them, it was by something more than a deliverance. After all, great deliverances are soon forgotten, and easily accounted for by secondary causes. Gratitude is seldom long lived, and gratitude to God passes away like the early dew. Something more than a remarkable national deliverance must have taken place. Or there must have been something associated with that

deliverance which filled the memory of it with more than wonder and made it outlast the proverbial transiency of gratitude.

More than a National Deliverance. The Prophets and Psalmists seem to imply that the deliverance was connected with a deeper knowledge of the character of God. If there was a bond or covenant between God and Israel, as the sacred writers intimate, this might involve no more than a covenant of protection on one side and the homage of worship on the other. But if at the time of crisis it was realised that the covenant was made with a God whose very character demanded from His worshippers the recognition of some ethical ideal, then we can understand how a certain moral glory surrounded the memory of the Exodus. For it is not by benefits alone that men are influenced, but by the moral disposition which bestows them: it is not the hand which gives that is blessed, but the heart which moves the hand. Mere lavishness in giving may be indolence, not interest: it is not the ministering to our needs which we value, but the thought and care for us and for our destiny. If, therefore, Israel at the time of the Exodus received the revelation of God as a being who acted not by caprice or favouritism, but on laws and lines of ethical principle: if, in fact, God was revealed to Israel as a God of character, then His great act of deliverance would be associated with that revelation: it would be much more than a piece of capricious patronage: it would hardly drop back into the category

of fortunate accidents : it would be the introduction of the people into a world of moral order : the light of an ethical ideal would hover over the memory of that time : they would realise that they were not only a people who had been delivered from bondage, but that they were delivered for a purpose. If behind them there was a deliverance, before them was a destiny, because God had chosen them to Himself, that 'they might keep His statutes and observe His laws.'

The Prophetic Recognition of this. Now, as far as we can gather, this is exactly the position which is taken up by the religious teachers of Israel. God made Himself known : 'When Israel was a child I loved him and called my son out of Egypt' (Hosea xi. 1). Israel was admitted to a certain revelation of God's character : Israel was called to share in the fulfilment of Divine purposes, and the purposes bore correspondence to the character. It is not needful for us at this stage to say how much of this character and these purposes was made known. It was, no doubt, comparatively little. The mass of the laws and ceremonies which meet us in the Pentateuch belong to a later date than Moses : we may follow the critics here. All that needs to be realised is that there seems to be sure ground for believing that at the Mosaic period there did occur a great national crisis, and that a certain elevation of ethical conception or thought of God was associated with it—that the Prophets pointed back to this period as to a time

when not only a great deliverance took place, but a certain covenant of faith, as it were, was established between Israel and her God. Israel was betrothed to God, for the fulfilment of the Divine will (Jer. xxxi. 32): she was to bring forth children who would tell the praise of God in the ends of the earth. The link was not merely one of material support on the one side and of a series of sacrifices on the other: it was a link in the experiences of the people, in their history, and binding them to a purpose and a destiny. It had an ethical foundation and an ethical object.

Without entering into an inquiry as to the extent of the revelation of God made to Israel at that period, we may notice two points which seem to be clear. Two features of the Divine character are frequently referred to—His righteousness and His goodness.

What these Conceptions involve. We can see how wide these conceptions are and how much they involve. To grasp these is to grasp that double thread which leads into the very centre of life's labyrinth: they are sufficient for the soul, and they involve all the theology. But their revelation at the Mosaic period, or at any other, does not mean that the full significance or wide application of them were instantly understood. A law or principle may be perceived in an instant, but it takes centuries to exhaust its full meaning or realise its range of application. Yet the mere statement of the principle becomes silently operative. It is so with conceptions of God's nature.

Given a certain idea of God, and the character of the worshipper is committed to a certain plane of thought. Add a new feature, and men's thoughts and characters will sooner or later exhibit added or modified traits. Introduce into conceptions of deity for the first time an ethical idea, and you have commenced the moral education of the people. We may apply this to Israel. Israel was Semitic : they shared Semitic ideas and Semitic character. Like other Semitics they were polytheists in theology and lacking in the instinct or capacity of self-organisation on any extended scale. They advance to Monotheism, and they become possessed of a certain national coherence. Evidently certain influences have been at work. One of these is a conception of God loftier than that of other Semitic tribes.

The Strong Ethical Element. The conception is ethical : God is good : God is just : the people are God's to fulfil His will : it is not for them to start aside like a broken bow. The goodness of God has shown itself in a great national emancipation : God makes them a people : they realise dimly, perhaps, and slowly, but yet powerfully, something of the Divine character. Goodness means something : righteousness means something. Here is a centralising and steadying influence planted in the people's life. Out of it will spring humaner thoughts of what man owes to man : harsh laws and severe customs, once needful, will be softened : a strong if stern sense of justice will make itself felt. Ethical principles, realised

as enthroned in heaven, will make themselves felt. We may compare nation with nation in moral conduct: we may collect criminal statistics, and argue that one nation is more moral than another: this is interesting and instructive, but, after all, the great question for a nation is not the amount of criminal statistics, but whether or not it possesses a moral ideal; for the possession of this makes possible or effective the appeal of prophet and teacher. It is so with Israel. The history shows us scenes of moral weakness and moral turpitude: we read of cruelty and treachery, of wicked craft and wholesale massacres: the pictures are sad and confusing, as must be the scenes which accompany the story of progress, but in the midst of all these scenes which shock and grieve us, we realise that this wayward and inconsistent people possess a moral ideal: the prophet may fail, but he does not speak wholly in the air. Down in the heart-depths of the people, with roots that were struck in a past far distant, but brilliant with memories, there is a capacity of moral response: they are a people who have lived for centuries in comradeship with a moral ideal: the possession of this capacity is the strength and justification of prophetic reproaches: in it lies also his hope when he changes his speech into pathetic appeal. And as in the possession of a moral ideal lies the hope and justification of the prophet, so also here lies one difference which marks Israel from surrounding nations. It is intimately related also with those Messianic hopes, which, amid many crude and material notions, played such a leading part in Israel's development. Christian people

can readily see that, once the idea that in God's character goodness and righteousness had a place took possession of a people's thoughts, it was inevitable that they should look forward to a time when 'mercy and truth should meet together, and righteousness and peace should kiss each other.'

CHAPTER IX

INSPIRATION

THERE are two words which have been constantly used in discussions about the Bible. Everyone has heard of the Inspiration of the Bible. Everyone has heard the Bible spoken of as the Revelation of God—as the Revealed Word. On these words many have rested, feeling that, if there is in the Bible no inspiration and no revelation, they have lost everything which makes the Bible precious.

Let me say at once that such people are quite right. If there is no inspiration and no revelation in the Bible, let us lay it down at once, and sadly confess that we, and sixty generations of our forefathers, have been greatly deceived. But there is a better course. Instead of laying it down, let us take up the Bible again, and let us look for the inspiration and revelation in it.

But here the question confronts us—How shall we recognise these things when we see them? Do we, in fact, know what we are looking for? What is Inspiration, that we may be ready to recognise its features? What is Revelation, that we may be prepared to receive it when it comes?

Can we define Inspiration? Even in the answer that I give to these questions I am afraid that the reader will be disappointed, for I confess that I know no satisfactory definition either of Inspiration or Revelation. I have looked through many treatises: I have met with many attempted definitions: some of them excellent approximations to definitions; but none are really adequate. The reason is not far to seek. There are some things which we can define, but they are chiefly in the realm of things material, or which lie wholly within the intellectual kingdom. There are other things which elude definition: we can feel them: we can realise their influence: we can recognise them as forces in life, but they refuse to be brought within the limits of strict definition. In saying this, we are not, I think, trying to win an illegitimate assent to a proposition by declaring that it lies in the region beyond that of logic. This is a favourite device on the part of the champions of superstition: they argue on behalf of some needless mystery or some imaginary theory that, as it belongs to a realm which transcends logic, therefore it can only be understood by sympathetic feeling; and hence they call upon us at the outset to put our reason into commission, and allow the matter to be settled by authority. This method appears to me to be no less fatal to faith than to reason, and I invite no one to pursue it here.

There are Things which defy Definition. What we really have to do in such cases is to ascertain whether

the matter in question can be brought within any of the known realms of knowledge. If it be a question of pure mathematics, we ask for demonstration : if it be a question of science or history, we ask for the facts. But there is one realm which yields us facts, but which nevertheless is constantly giving us facts which surpass definition. This realm is the realm of man's nature. Here we can have solid facts ; but we are constantly baffled in our attempt to define. Reason and instinct are facts, but how shadowy the line becomes when we try to discriminate between them. We can easily assign certain results to the operation of reason : we can perhaps equally readily admit that instinct accounts for others ; but between these there lies a heap of phenomena which we hesitate to assign exclusively to either, for we feel that they may be claimed by both ; for who can say where the operation of reason ends and that of instinct begins ? or who can say whether reason is the foundation of instinct or its culmination ? Is instinct only experienced reason, or is reason only developed instinct ? The same difficulty of defining waits upon the word Inspiration. Let us put out of mind, for a moment, all thought of religious inspiration.

Case of Great Literary Works. Let us think of the inspiration of the poet or the painter. Let us suppose ourselves asked to define what we mean by this inspiration. 'You tell me,' says our questioner, 'that this poem, this *Divina Commedia* or this *Hamlet*, is a work possessed of

inspiration. Will you tell me what you mean by that?' Does not everyone feel the difficulty? We may coin some happy explanatory phrase, but we shall hardly be able to give in any true and strict sense a definition, *i.e.*, we shall not be able so to describe the features or characteristics which constitute inspiration, as that our description covers exactly, completely and, what is more important, exclusively those characteristics. But the fact of the existence of such inspired works is not to be denied because we fail in defining it. It is with this fact as with the previous one. We can say of certain works, 'These belong to the class of inspired works': we can say of others, 'These lack inspiration.' We recognise the inspiration of Goethe's *Faust*, of the *Paradise Lost*, of *Othello*, of *Lear*, of *The Ancient Mariner*, of the *Prometheus*; and we should never dream of associating with the word inspiration *Gulliver's Travels*, or *The Annus Mirabilis*, or Tupper's *Proverbial Philosophy*. We can so far distinguish, but we feel that between the unquestionably inspired and the unquestionably not inspired there is a debatable land inhabited by those whom we cannot classify. In other words, the exact frontier defies delimitation. It is with this question as it is with the rainbow or the prismatic colours, we can tell the red ray from the green, the violet from the blue, but we cannot determine the line when the violet ceases to be violet and becomes indigo: the harmonious declension from one colour to another is so delicate and gradual that the blue is rising into view when we are hardly pre-

pared to say that the indigo has vanished. Here, too, there is a debatable land: here, too, the frontier defies delimitation.

Parallel Difficulty with the Bible. Is it any surprise, then, to be told that definition of Bible inspiration is not to be expected and ought not to be insisted on? Let none exclaim, at peril of their reputation for good sense, that, if things be so, the Inspiration of the Bible vanishes. The reverse is the case: inspiration is a quality so real and yet so subtle, so entrancing yet so impalpable, that when present it compels our homage, and forces from us the acknowledgment of its transcendent force and reality. It is like genius. We know it when we see it, but we cannot define it. It is like the multitudinous sea, great, inexorable, restless, real, but refusing to be bound by limits, now invading new territories, now forsaking in scorn its former habitations. It is like genius and the sea in this also that it appeals to the noblest and least definable part of our nature. It appeals to the spirit of man. That in us which comes from God responds to that which God has sent. Into whatsoever voice God's spirit breathes, the God-given spirit in man hastens tremblingly to respond. As love answers to love, eager yet afraid, so does man's soul recognise inspiration when it comes. And as love, genius and the sea are all tremendous facts, and yet defy definition, so is inspiration one tremendous fact, and not the less tremendous, nor the less a fact, because nobody yet has been able to define it.

Notes of Inspiration not always Evident. One objection may occur to our minds. It may be said that there are parts of the Bible which do not carry this note of inspiration : parts, that is, which do not evoke a deep and undeniable spiritual response. We may be told, for instance, that the Sermon on the Mount, the Parable of the Prodigal Son, the story of the Sinning Woman, the Panegyric of Charity, the Book of Job, the Double Isaiah, may possess this high quality, but that there are large portions of the Bible that are like deserts and produce no inspired flower. We may be asked what is there to move our spiritual nature in the elaborate ceremonial instructions in Leviticus, in the genealogies of Chronicles, in the list of furniture in Ezra and Nehemiah, in the sanguinary stories of Joshua and Judges? There is truth in this ; but the same is true of portions of the great works which nevertheless we call, in a literary sense, inspired works. Homer sometimes nods. There are barren wastes in the *Paradise Lost*, and barbarisms in the *Divina Commedia* ; and yet we speak of these works as truly inspired ; for the inspiration we recognise in them is not the inspiration of a few passages, but what I may call the converging inspiration of the whole. The whole impression left upon us is the impression of a living and appealing force.

Inspiration is Massive. It is not in the long run the eloquent and effective portions of a great work which constitute its greatness ; it is the irresistible conviction that

we have been nobly spoken to by a noble spirit : it is the realisation of qualities, unquestionable and indefinable : it is the consciousness that our souls have been drawn out in admiration and joy, in hope and despair, in aspiration, wonder and love : it is the sense that the highest and best in us have been forcibly appealed to by a spirit akin to yet superior to our own. Inspiration is not in the parts, but in the breath which animates the whole : it is not in the letter but in the spirit. There are detailed beauties without which complete expression would be imperfect, just as there are beauties of sky, of river, of grass, tree and flower ; but as it is the happy harmony of these which make up the beauty of the landscape, so it is the dominating spirit which subordinates these to some noble end, and not any assemblage of isolated beauties which is indispensable to the inspiration of a great work.

Practical Quality of Inspiration. If we keep these principles in mind, we shall the more clearly realise the significance of inspiration in connection with the Bible. Be it observed that we are not now dealing with the question of the difference between the inspiration of the Bible and the inspiration of some great literary work. We are dealing rather with the resemblance. The word Inspiration is applied to both. We talk of the Inspiration of Homer : we talk of the Inspiration of the Bible. There must be some leading principles of resemblance—whatever difference also there may be—between the qualities of inspiration in the two cases. Other-

wise the application of the same word would never have taken place. It was the conviction that in some way or other there were analogous distinctive qualities in certain great works, religious and secular (if we may be allowed these misleading terms), which led to the use of the word inspiration. These distinctive qualities, we say, may be described, but cannot be defined : we can speak of them more easily by negations than by affirmative. We can say that though these works may possess noble passages, the noble passages alone would not constitute inspiration : these works may possess dull and dreary passages, but the existence of these does not destroy the conviction of their inspiration : the inspiration is the sense that there is in these works a breath of life, the sense of which is not driven away by the beauty of some passages or the dulness of others : it is a breath of life in this that its warm and vital force makes itself felt by us, appeals to us and compels our living response. Like the memories we carry away from Italy or Palestine are the feelings which are ours after closing a great work. We know that we have crossed open marsh and tedious plain : we know that we have looked with sudden gladness upon foaming torrent, brown rocks, and clinging pines, but beyond all these we carry away the breath of the country : we feel thus the spirit of a fresh life has entered into ours, and Italy is no longer a map, but a living home of living people which has imparted to us something which is a priceless and deathless heritage. It is the same with the Bible : there are passages of surpassing beauty and eloquence :

there are portions which are barren of instruction, or which jar upon our moral sensibility; but the power of its inspiration does not reside in the former, nor is it really impaired by the latter: the genius of the whole is too great to be commanded by the one or injured by the other: its commanding force takes possession of the candid student. It is like the land which gave it birth. We may complain at times of the treeless wilds through which we have to travel, but when we have made the full circuit of the land we shall confess that it is a land which flows with milk and honey. In other words, the quality of inspiration is like that of beauty, of genius, even of life. We know how real it is by the intellectual or moral response which it evokes. We can neither define nor ignore it. We cannot define because it transcends the materials of that definition; we cannot ignore it because it fills us with rapture, lifts us into a higher plane, quickens the best and highest faculties of our nature: in short, it inspires us, and hence we know its inspiration.

General and Bible Inspiration. It will then be asked how do we discriminate between the inspiration of the Bible and the inspiration of the great works of human genius? What marks the difference between the inspiration of St. John and that of Shakespeare? Is not the inspiration of the Bible separate and unique? or are we to view it as belonging to the same family and lineage as that of the recognised masterpieces of literature and art? The answer seems to me to be

simple enough. In one sense we can recognise no difference : in another sense we must recognise a deep and real difference. In one sense there is no difference. If every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, if wisdom and skill come from God, if the craft of Bezaleel and the insight of Daniel, the Song of David and the sagacity of Solomon, as well as the spiritual insight of St. Paul and St. Peter, were from God, we must allow that, so far as family origin and lineage are concerned, the inspired gifts of all workers, those called secular and those called sacred, are all from God. It was He who gave to all the wisdom to get the wealth of thought which they scattered in the world. As far, therefore, as origin is concerned all these gifts are of God. In this aspect we can trace no difference between the inspiration of one class of writer and another. But in another sense we can trace a deep and very real difference. If in the source these works are united : in their direction they are divided. If they all in a sense come from God, they do not all go to God. It is not enough to feel the throb of a Divine power in a great creation : it is not enough that we feel that it is possessed of a force that seizes hold of us and commands some strange and inward response : this is true of many great works, but even among these we recognise a difference of the direction of their appeal. Not all lead to God : not all lay hold upon our moral nature and draw our conscience under its dominion. It is in the persistently Godward direction of the Bible that we note the characteristic of its inspiration. Gifts are given to many,

but not to all is given grace to use them to God's glory and man's highest good. Other works possess a power which rejoices, refreshes, invigorates our intellectual nature, nay, which quickens our moral being; but no book like the Bible so continuously and so mightily has led men to God, or has so widely and deeply enriched and enlivened the religious consciousness of mankind.

Witness to Bible Inspiration. The witness to this view is to be found in the history of the religious consciousness of Christendom. Into the details of this we cannot enter; the subject is too large for our present scope; but this much we may note. Let us take certain books which have profoundly influenced religious thought and character in Christendom and beyond it—*The Confessions of St. Augustine*, the *De Imitatione Christi*, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, and *The Christian Year*. These books are saturated with thoughts which come from every part of that wide religious literature which is comprised in the Bible. If anyone were to take the trouble to estimate the Bible allusions and references in these books, he would realise how slender the residuary thought would be: the best spiritual enrichment of these books is from the Bible, and more, their power is just in proportion to the measure with which they have absorbed the ethical spirit and quality of the Bible. The Bible is, in fact, their inspiration. Thus the works which in a pre-eminent degree have become the spiritual companions of devout souls have owed their vigour and nourishment

to the Bible. We may discount the force of the Bible in whatever way we will. We may say that parts have been dislocated from their context, that books once deemed to be the coherent product of one mind are compilations, that there are historical inaccuracies to be met with in certain passages, that at times inspired persons seem to commend doubtful transactions, that the love of the miraculous evinced by some writers constitutes a difficulty in accepting their narratives ; but when we have said all this and more, there still remains the solid and invincible fact that in this Bible millions have found strength and consolation, that from this Bible, as from an unfailing fountain, the most helpful spiritual teachers have drawn their purest and most refreshing supplies of truth, that this book has been the inspiration of doctors, pastors, evangelists and teachers, that from its pages men of strong passions and reckless lives have drawn a power which has transformed their lives and consecrated their affections. We cannot define the Inspiration of the Bible, but its inspiration has been evident in converted lives and in regenerated natures : it has healed the broken in heart : it has given sight to the eyes, and joy to the souls of men : it has created a whole anthology : it has loosed the singing heart of Christendom : it has fashioned the characters and purified the taste of great communities. To deny its inspiration is to deny a fact which is wider and more significant than the influence of Shakespeare or the victories of Napoleon.

And it is due to this fact that multitudes of simple and

unlearned souls, who could not discuss questions of criticism, have nevertheless found in the Bible those fresh springs which have invigorated their natures and enabled them, as with a Divine energy, to walk as pilgrims and to live lives of unquestioned saintliness.

CHAPTER X

REVELATION IN THE BIBLE

Revelation. Another word often used in connection with the Bible is the word Revelation. So strongly has the idea of revelation been associated with the Bible that the word Revelation has been used as synonymous with the Bible. The Bible is the 'Revelation,' or it is the 'Revealed Word.' Can we define 'Revelation'?

Not the same as Inspiration. Before we answer this, let us clear away a confusion. Revelation and Inspiration have been treated as convertible terms. This is a confusion. There may be inspiration without revelation; and there may be revelation without inspiration. On the other hand, inspiration may lead to revelation, and revelation is often impossible without it. But nevertheless it is of moment to remember that they are not the same thing. Inspiration is the breath of life in a work or a man. Revelation is the unveiling of a truth or principle which clears or enlarges our thoughts. We know more through revelation; we feel more through inspiration. Thus though revelation and inspiration may be brought into close relationship, though they be mutually helpful and sometimes mutually dependent, they are not identical: they must not be confused with one another.

Revelation is unveiling of Truth. What, then, is revelation? Shall we be wrong in saying that the addition of any truth or principle which enlarges our range of knowledge is a revelation? The truth unknown before is unveiled, and thus becomes a revelation to us. Further, it is to be remembered that the word Revelation implies that the truth or fact unveiled existed before it was made known. The discoveries of science unveil to us laws which have been at work for all the ages. Revelation is not the invention of a new truth, but the uncovering of an old one. As clouds melt and disclose the sun, so does knowledge banish ignorance and show us things as they are. From this it follows that when once the unveiling of a law or truth takes place, we often are able to realise how true it is: we are able to discover fresh evidences of its truth: we see how it solves certain difficulties: it surprises us that we did not think of it before: it seems so clear: its wonder is its simplicity. How readily we have accepted the laws of motion, for instance! How difficult it is for us to take in the clumsy Ptolemaic theories! The burst of surprise once over, the new truth or law takes its place among things which are quite natural, as we say. We find ourselves able to test and apply them.

Truth unveiled often so True as to be Obvious. It is this fact that sometimes blinds us to the greatness of the discovery. The thing once revealed seems so obvious. But it is precisely here that we need to exercise justice in our thoughts if we are to appreciate rightly the labours of the

past. Let us take the truth or law or principle which seems so obvious to us; and let us estimate its value by trying to realise what we should be without the knowledge of it. If the knowledge of it simplifies our thoughts of the world in which we live, let us endeavour to picture how perplexing life would be without such knowledge.

Revelation in the Bible. If we keep this thought in view we shall be able to estimate the importance of the revelation contained in the Bible. I say contained in the Bible; for the Bible is like a mine: the gold is found in an environment of nature: sometimes it may be sifted out easily, as over a running stream: at other times we must dig as for hid treasure, or even only reach the gold after a long and hard crushing process. But rich ore is as surely there as are the rocks out of which we can blast it or the soil out of which we must dig it or the rivers from which we must snatch it. In other words, the revelation is given to us in different degrees and under different conditions. This is surely the true view of Revelation: it is, if we follow the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, the scriptural view of Revelation: the revelation was given 'by divers portions and in divers manners.' Other notions of revelation than this have been current, but it seems to me to be both wise and reverent to accept the just and well-considered description which we are given by this writer. It affirms a truth which is simple and can be easily verified: it avoids foolish and exaggerated

literalism: it leads to a clear and intelligible climax, the Revelation in a Person.

Is Progressive. The revelation then came in bits and in various ways. This prepares us to find that the revelation was of a progressive character. A truth shadowed out here, and made clearer there. Truth now hinted at in custom, and purified in some modification of the custom. Conceptions of God, first dim and accompanied by some darkness, then taking clearer outline, anon gaining in health and colour. Religious ideas at first are coloured by unethical egotism. When this is the case, man's bodily needs take a prominent place in the conception. Later religious ideas take a more definitely moral tone. Then possessed by a deeper insight into God's nature, but darkened with deeper shadows by reason of the growing light, they at length emerge robed in the pure, clear light of spiritual thought.

Some Landmarks of this Progress. We can only briefly indicate some aspects of this progress of Revelation. It was a step when men realised any Divine intelligence ruling over their lives: it was another step when they realised that the Divine power might be allied with their happiness: it was a further step when they realised that the Divine power was actuated by principles of righteousness: another advance was made when it became clear that God was the God of all: a last step was made when it was realised that God might be in man, and that most certainly man

was in God. Take the steps indicated above, and realise that each as it is taken involves a revelation, perhaps slight and partial, but still an unveiling of a portion of truth. Remember that only the portion unveiled rests in the light: the remainder is dark, and that therefore in that darkness we may find still crude and depressing imaginations. Conceive now that the Bible gives us a history of these steps. Be prepared to see men, groping among low and unformed notions, visited with a gleam of light, taking in its significance slowly, and so dwelling still in a sort of twilight. Watch the process as light follows light. Realise the importance of each step: measure it not by the light which follows but by the darkness which is left behind, and we shall understand that we are as men who are watching the steps of the coming dawn: we shall be able to appreciate intelligently the position of those whose lot was cast in the twilight hours: we shall see that though to them many things were obscure, yet to them truths were being made plain: in other words, we shall perceive that there was a revelation vouchsafed to them: we shall estimate the measure of light which was given to them, and we shall know that God did in olden days speak by divers portions unto the fathers: we shall estimate also the measure of darkness which enfolded the dawning light, and we shall judge them with a large and intelligent charity: we shall judge them more by their aspirations than by their achievements, when we think of them as those who waited for the Lord with desire more ardent than those who wait for the morning.

Revelation is a Process which the Bible discloses. Briefly, then, revelation is best understood as the name given to the gradual process by which God made Himself known to men: revelation as disclosed in the Bible must be looked for as subject to this gradual process. God is but dimly known at first (Jer. xi. 13, ii. 28; Acts xvii. 27). Men's notions of Him were crude, limited, and deficient in ethical quality (1 Sam. iv.; Jer. iii. 16; 1 Kings xii. 28), but the Bible shows us successive stages (Gen. xxii. 1-18; Micah vi. 7, 8; Amos v. 26; 1 Kings xi.): as the great religious leaders understand God and His providence, the Polytheistic notions are slowly undermined (Isa. xli. 7, xliv. 5-21; Acts vii. 40-42): as prophets realise the ethical character of God, the narrow notions of a Patron or Tribal or Race Deity disappear (Amos iii. 2, v. 18-22; Isa. xxviii. 23-29): as the evangelists show how truly the Divine did and does enter into all human life, the notions of ceremonial cleanness and uncleanness, the distinction between religious and secular personages and callings, and debtor and creditor conceptions of human duty disappear: the manhood is taken into God, the measure of all things is spiritual: all men are brought before the Judgment Seat of Christ, who is Himself, for the present, the final Revelation of God.

CHAPTER XI

CRITICISM NO NOVELTY ; SOME FEATURES OF ITS PROGRESS

Criticism no Novelty. There are many devout people who dislike the idea of modern criticism ; they believe, quite wrongly, that it is a novelty due to the restless and irreverent spirit of modern times, and that its methods are violent and arbitrary.

It is impossible here adequately to treat this view ; but we may indicate one or two lines of thought which will serve to show that the conclusions arrived at by modern critics are neither rashly crude nor arbitrary. First it must be remembered that Biblical criticism is not a science of yesterday. The liberty of criticism has, as Professor George Adam Smith has pointed out, come down to us from the New Testament. 'The New Testament treatment of the Old not only bequeaths to the Church the liberty of criticism, but along many lines the need and obligation of criticism.' Thus the suggestion of criticism comes with very ancient and venerable authority. It is perhaps too much to say that this right and liberty of criticism has never been laid aside by the Church ; for there were periods in which mental indolence, literary indifference and spiritual dulness made

men indifferent to the great and sacred treasures which they had inherited in the Bible. But it is not too much to say that whenever the Church was intellectually and spiritually alive, the critical spirit was more or less alive also. Men could not read these books without asking what they meant! they could not study intelligently without observing variations and peculiarities. Like men who see in some historic building indications of different periods of architecture, so the students of the Bible could not fail to observe divergent literary architecture in the Bible.

Earlier Indications of Its Existence. Thus, for example, Calvin called attention to mistakes in the text. Differences in story, or double accounts of the same event, were noted in the later part of the seventeenth century by a French priest named Simon. The idea that different narratives were used by Moses in the compilation of the Book of Genesis is not an idea of our own time. As long ago as 1753 a work was published in Brussels bearing the title *Conjectures on the Original Memoirs of which it appears Moses made use in composing the Book of Genesis*. The writer Astruc called attention to the fact that one of the narratives of the creation made use of the name Elohim, while the other introduced the name Jehovah (Yahweh). The notion of the composite character of the Pentateuch is thus no recent notion. It has been before the world for a hundred and fifty years. Naturally the idea, once started, was investigated. Investigation led to various

theories, which have been tried, and thrown aside, modified or accepted, with the result that the composite character of the books is now practically admitted by all serious students.

Hexateuch and Pentateuch. There is a word which is now commonly used among critics with which the ordinary English Bible reader should be acquainted. This is the word Hexateuch. In comparatively recent times we heard frequently of the Pentateuch or Five Books of Moses, as they were called. It was a matter of current but otiose belief that Moses was the author of these five books, but it was realised among thoughtful people that this belief had no very secure foundation: it was a tradition acquiesced in, and not in any sense a proved fact. As the opportunity and habit of reflection became more general, and the spirit of investigation became active, people began to realise that it was hardly possible that all the five books known as the Pentateuch could have been written by Moses: the most obvious difficulty being that it is at least unusual for an author to describe minutely the circumstances under which he departed from the earth. Of course there were among those who take credulity for faith various ingenious attempts to get over this difficulty; but the spirit of inquiry moved forward; and it was felt before long that the first six books of the Bible were connected quite as closely as the first five—that those six books are in fact a literary unit, and may be considered as a treatise or work in six parts. This

gave rise naturally to the word Hexateuch—a term which is used to embrace as one literary work the first six books of the Bible. When it is said that the Hexateuch may be regarded as one literary work, it is not meant that it owes its present form to any one writer : it only means that after various processes the different component parts of these books were brought, under some final editing, into a sort of general literary unity.

Elements incorporated. Our space forbids any elaborate or lengthy account of the steps by which this result was reached. It will be quite enough to say that various bits of folk-lore, ancient stories and songs, together with the record of certain laws or customs accepted or enacted in different epochs, are united together by a thin and desultory narrative. This narrative was designed to express the fact that Israel had a history, but it was not intended to be a strict or accurate chronological record of the actual sequence of facts and incidents ; indeed the historical sequence is clearly often disregarded : the laws are grouped together without much regard to dates, being arranged rather by subjects than by chronology. When this work is carefully studied, it becomes possible, not indeed to completely isolate from each other the various elements out of which it has been built, but at least to indicate roughly the lines and directions of the different strata of which it is composed. In all probability, the stories and songs are of ancient date—handed down from mouth to mouth, sung or recited at great national or

popular festivals: in this way the legends would be preserved, and new tales or songs added from time to time.

The Editing of Material. At length there came a period when it was felt that these floating stories, legends, songs and laws should be incorporated into the history of the people whom they had inspired and disciplined. The period at which this was done was probably during the ninth or eighth century before Christ. We know that about this time there were so-called Schools of the Prophets, and it is possible that to these the people owed the first idea of working the existing material into a quasi-historical form. There probably existed two, certainly more than one version of ancient history, and later editors sought to blend these versions into one: this accounts for the way in which what we may call the strata run into each other. A little later, in the reign of Josiah, a code of laws, believed to have been derived from Mosaic times, was discovered at Jerusalem, and this was at length combined with the earlier history. A further body of laws, more sacerdotal in tone, was compiled during the Exile, and over this it is thought that Ezekiel exercised some influence. After the return of the people to their own land, a further version of the history with additional legislation was put forth and sanctioned under Ezra and Nehemiah. The body of laws compiled in the Exile was combined with these: the sacerdotal character of the laws was intensified: fresh

laws were added from time to time, and finally, about perhaps the third century before Christ, the Hexateuch assumed the form in which we now have it.

Considerations and Arguments. It is quite impossible to give here any adequate account of the reasons which have led critics to regard the Hexateuch as a compilation into which various narratives and traditions have been combined. All that can be attempted is the very briefest statement of the grounds upon which the conclusion is based. Four arguments have been advanced.

Language and Style. There is the argument derived from language and style.

It was observed that certain expressions recurred where the word Elohim was used and a different set appeared where the word Jehovah was used. The word for 'sanctuary' was seen to be a favourite in one group, but did not occur in another. The phrase 'everlasting statute' was common in one group, but practically absent from others. Again, in differing groups, different words were used for the same thing. Hebron is called Kirjath Arba in the sections where God is El Shaddai or Elohim and not Jehovah. As an illustration of characteristic differences between different sections of narrative, take the story of the promise of a son to Abraham. Read separately the story in which the word for God is El Shaddai and that in which Jehovah is used. 'The Elohim group repeats with unvarying combination

the formula "Be fruitful and multiply," to which is sometimes prefixed "bless." The Jehovah (Yahweh) *catena* is less monotonous in form; it presents comparisons with the dust of the earth, the stars of heaven, the sand of the seashore. The members of each series are bound together by unanimity of thought and expression, but differenced from their counterparts on the alternative religious base' ('The Hexateuch,' by Professor J. Estlin Carpenter and G. Harford-Battersby, Vol. I. p. 65).

Customs and Institutions. There is an argument from Religious Institutions. One group of narratives dealing with sacrifice restricts the place of sacrifice to one spot only, the place which God shall choose. In another group sacrifice is spoken of as permissible in any spot where the devout man is disposed to offer it. The classes of sacrifices differ in the different groups. In one section the Tabernacle is taken for granted as standing; in another the Tent is described as being erected later. Further, there are discrepancies observable in connection with the ministry at the sanctuary. In some places the right to sacrifice does not appear to be limited to special persons, such as priests: in others such a limitation is clear and emphatic. 'Exodus belongs to the code which admits of a plurality of sanctuaries: the Deuteronomic principles recognise but one' ('The Hexateuch,' *ut supra*, p. 56).

Religious Conceptions expressed. There is an argument derived from variations in religious conceptions.

In one group it is taken for granted that the name of Jehovah was known from the beginning : in another it is clearly stated that this name was given as a new revelation of the nature of God to Moses. In one narrative what are called anthropomorphic conceptions are frequent and natural ; in another they almost disappear and give place to simple and sublime declarations of the Divine power and action. In some places there are traces of the Henotheistic idea : Jehovah is the God of Israel, and is spoken of therefore as the Lord *thy God*. 'Jehovah was the God of Israel as Chemosh was the God of Ammon' (*cp.* Judges xi. 24). In other narratives Jehovah is the Lord—the one Lord of all.

General Idea of Growth. Lastly, the result of the investigation of these differences in language, style, religious and social custom and religious conception has been felt to confirm the general theory that the Hexateuch must be regarded as a kind of development.

The Groups. The materials employed in the Hexateuch have been divided into groups. These groups are distinguished from one another by appropriate letters, viz. : D standing for the Deuteronomic group, JE for the Jehovah-Elohim group, P for the Priestly group of writings.

The Group known as D. To understand this, it is perhaps well to take first the Book of Deuteronomy. As

Kittel says, 'Unsought, and almost of its own accord, Deuteronomy stands forth amidst the independent constituents of the great Law Book which bears the name of Moses' (*History of the Hebrews*, Vol. I. p. 59). We know that in the reign of Josiah a certain Book of the Law was found. Can Deuteronomy be this? Its name, its size, its contents, the effect of its reading (2 Kings xxiii. 21, etc.) favour the general conclusion that it was. There are, however, indications which suggest that Deuteronomy was not at the time of Josiah of great antiquity. Its language and method of statement, its repetitions and other characteristics relate it to the eighth and seventh centuries B.C. The opening words suggest that the wilderness is left behind: the time-marks belong to a later period than Moses: the monarchy is described (chap. xvii. 14, etc.): the touches of phrase carry us back to the pompous court of Solomon. There is a well-established prophetic order. There are courts of central authority.

The Group known as JE. Now, besides this Deuteronomic book, called D by the critics, we have a progressive narrative flowing in two streams, one being the stream in which God is styled Jehovah (Yahweh): the other in which the name Elohim is used. This dual narrative is known as JE. The Deuteronomic section of the Hexateuch is dependent upon this dual narrative, but there has been noticed in it a preference for the Elohist stream of narrative. What we have, therefore,

is a double tradition in JE, marked by sufficiently clear characteristics to be treated as distinct, but nevertheless blending together so determinedly as to be capable of being regarded as one stream, or, if two, as flowing within the same banks. Separate from these, but dependent on them, and much later, is D.

The Group known as P. From this we may pass to the latest section of the Hexateuch, viz., that which is known to the critics as P. This is the residue, so to speak, of the Hexateuch after the portions hitherto spoken of have been taken away. By signs and tokens such as have been described the two great portions D and JE have been given their separate place. What remains of the Hexateuch is found to possess certain beauties which give it a character of its own. Its phraseology, its repetitions, its legal tone, its rigid construction, mark it out as being in some sense a separate work. These features, moreover, enable the critic to determine its extent, and on the question of its extent we are assured by Dr. Kittel that there is 'an almost universal agreement.' At one time this segment of the Hexateuch was believed to be of very great antiquity. Latterly, however, the general opinion has been that it is the latest portion of the Hexateuch. It has sometimes been called the Grundschrift or Foundation writing of the whole; but this title can only be taken to mean—not that the documents which constitute it are in any sense the earliest or original documents of the Hexateuch, but that the editors

(to use a modern phrase) so compiled the Hexateuch as to give to this, the latest section of it, a dominating influence, or, to use Kittel's words, 'pieced together the various writings of the Hexateuch in such a way as almost everywhere to make P's line of thought the foundation of the whole, and wherever possible to work the other writings into this (*History of the Hebrews*, Vol. I. p. 97). The letter P has been used to denote this last important portion of the Hexateuch, because it is described as the Priestly writing.

We can readily understand that the hands of the latest editors would be employed naturally in piecing the whole Hexateuch in such a fashion as would give prominence and influence to their favourite or peculiar tone of thought. The date of this final portion is supposed to be some time after the Exile. All that we know of the period and the conditions of the return harmonise with this supposition. The circumstances were just such as to encourage a very definite legalism. To use a phrase which has become current among novelists, it was the psychological moment for the development to the legalistic spirit. The Exile had left little hope and also little chance of renewed national activities on any large scale: the consciousness of the sins for which the Exile was considered to be the punishment was likely, in people rendered timid by long enslavement, to generate a certain scrupulousness of obedience.

The Course of Development Natural. If we consider the whole matter, we shall realise that the conclusions

reached by critics are quite in harmony with general experience. There is what we may call a law of progress. First some great principle is enunciated: then the principle becomes rationalised, *i.e.*, it is arranged according to prevalent intellectual notions: then, when a certain intellectual completeness is reached, the ordering of life according to these notions is felt to be important. Conformity is desired: rules affecting life and conduct are multiplied: authority in all matters is expected: and the period of ceremonialism is reached. In other words, first the growth—perhaps by slow degrees—of certain great thoughts, the product of a large experience: these principles and thoughts digested into notions and laws: then detailed codes of law involving great carefulness in ritual and ceremony. All this time men are really seeking order. The age of inspiration is succeeded by the age of reason and law: the age of reason and law by the age of authority, ritual and observance. The tendency exhibited is natural, but it involves dangers. The effort to apply translates truths into dogmas, and principles into laws, and laws into rules. In the effort at completeness and minuteness the spirit evaporates. Then all things are ripe for change. The old bottles can serve no more. The time of revolution or reformation is needed. Dogmatism is truth crystallised: what it gains in definiteness it loses in power. Ritualism is worship crystallised, and what it gains in elaboration it loses in spirituality. Thus does good custom tend to corrupt the world. The history of the Bible exhibits this—while on the one hand

we can trace a slow and steady advance in religious conception, we can trace also the tendency to stiff lifelessness, of which we have spoken. There is beauty and teaching in all history, especially in history which chronicles the ever-growing spiritual conceptions of men, but it is only natural that in the midst of this growing good the tendency to formalism, both in thought and worship, should show itself. What we see in literature shows itself in religion. The age of free expression is followed by the age of imitation: the increase of cultivated taste ends in a stiffness and pedantry of style from which a reaction is inevitable. Is it surprising, therefore, to be told that the history of Israel's religion exhibits the same features? Do we wonder that trite legalism should assert itself at one time, and that the elaborate ceremonialism of the Priestly code should be one of the latest phases of religious development, and that thus we should see the prevalence of a general formalism preparing the way for Him who came to deliver men from the bondage of the letter into the freedom of the Spirit?

Hence we are to look at these books, and in their measure at other books of the Bible also, not as we look at Salisbury Cathedral begun and finished under a single plan, but rather as we look at Westminster Abbey, in which we can trace the work of various minds and the language of different ages. The illustration will serve to reassure anxious minds. There are beauties, no doubt, which are due to the harmonious influence of a single brain, but the cathedral of one period and one

architect misses the richness, the historical interest, the splendour of various associations which cling to the stones and structure of the many-aged minster. We lose nothing of reverence: we gain much in teaching, when thus the spirit of different periods can speak to us from neighbouring walls. The work of one mind like one of St. Paul's Epistles can teach us much, but can we not learn also when the impress of the religious feelings of different periods meets us in the same book? If divergent conceptions of the Divine character and different interpretations of the Divine law meet us in the historical books, is there no lesson to our faith in noticing the steps by which Israel was led to purer and more spiritual thoughts of the Divine nature? Is there not a distinct gain when we can realise that these books reflect controversies which prevailed in long gone ages? Are we not able to form much clearer views of the prophets and teachers of past times when we realise that they had to contend against degrading and unspiritual ideas which prevailed widely, and which were clung to with tenacity and abandoned with reluctance?

CHAPTER XII

THE HISTORICAL VALUE OF THE BIBLE

Varying Character of Portions of the Bible. What is the historical value of the Bible? This question will inevitably be asked by many; but at once we see that the question is too wide to admit of a general answer. The various parts of the Bible are not all alike in character. Some portions have a direct and real historical value: they contain clear and probably sufficient contemporary narrative to be reckoned as documents of historical importance, *i.e.*, they give evidence, as it were, of the matters they record. But other portions can only possess an indirect value as history: books like the Epistles of St. Paul, which may be described as moral or religious treatises, are only occasionally and, so to speak, unintentionally historical: it is quite true that occasional and undesigned evidence, as it has been called, is of great service to the historian, but this value is only adequately realised when we remember that the treatise is not intended to be history. Again, when we turn to the narrative portions of the Bible, we must recognise that they do not all possess the same historical importance. Some contain clear narrative, sufficiently contemporary in character to be

reckoned as documents of unquestionable historical value, *i.e.*, they can be cited as evidence of the matters they record. Other portions of the Bible are more complex in character, they contain an admixture of folk-lore and quasi-historical narrative—the narrative, that is to say, blends together tribal and personal stories: incidents which belong to the experience of the tribe, are narrated as though they formed part of the life of an individual. Take, for example, the Book of Genesis. We have become familiar with certain names; and we have formed mental pictures of Abraham and Isaac, of Esau and Jacob, of Moses and Joshua: they have been as real to our imagination as Peter and James and John.

The Individual Heroes. We are startled when we hear it suggested that these Old Testament heroes may belong to a world of shadows: we do not like to lose our hold upon these men who filled so large a place in our early thoughts. They have been so real to us that we should dislike to see them sinking into the mists of doubtful legend. Let us reassure ourselves. The wanton spirit which was disposed to treat all these heroes as mythical does not prevail to-day among serious students. At one time the reckless readiness to explain away all Old Testament heroes was fashionable. The love of truth has taken its place, and scholars as a rule are anxious to interpret as carefully and as honestly as possible the records which exist. To understand the position of matters, and to measure correctly the historical

value of the Old Testament books, the following facts should be borne in mind.

General Facts. 1. The documents which constitute the material of the inquiry belong to periods ranging from the eighth to the fifth century before Christ.

2. The histories and incidents which they record belong many of them to centuries earlier.

3. The books which we possess are composite, *i.e.*, they contain songs, legends, laws, customs, narratives, varying versions of the same incidents drawn from different sources, interwoven together, edited, re-edited, till they assumed their present form: they are, in fact, products of time, in which chronological distinctions are not to be expected.

4. It is sometimes difficult to determine whether a tribe or an individual is spoken of. We are familiar with the names Jacob and Israel, but every reader of the Old Testament knows that sometimes these names are used for the Patriarch and sometimes for the whole people. When the Psalmist says 'my people would not hear my voice and Israel would not obey me,' we have little difficulty in knowing thus it is of the people of Israel that he is speaking. But it is not always as easy to determine. Who, for instance, is the Jacob referred to when God is called the God of Jacob? It is not always a lack of perception on our part when we are in doubt about such matters. The narrative edited, to say the least, several centuries after the supposed events blends the individual with the tribe:

the actions of the family as a whole are treated as though they were the deeds of an individual: in the dim distance the figures are seen as trees walking, but whether it is the exploit of a hero, or the courageous tenacity of an heroic tribe, it is difficult to determine. Thus, for instance, the blessings of the tribes given in Genesis and in Deuteronomy are spoken with strongly marked individuality, but it is to the tribes of Israel, not to the sons of Jacob, that our thoughts are directed.

Tribe and Individual blended in Story. We must not dwell on this, but it is well to remember this tendency to blend the individual with the tribe, and to treat the tribe as an individual, for in this way certain difficulties and shadows disappear. Narratives, the recording of which might reasonably revolt us if interpreted of an individual, become intelligible, and their record natural enough when they are only the vivid relation of tribal irregularities. For example, it has been maintained that the story of Reuben as told in Genesis only chronicles the deviation of the tribe of Reuben from established marriage customs. It is an expression of social disapproval.

Discrimination sometimes Difficult. The Old Testament gives us narratives in which it is not easy to discriminate between parable and fact, between folk-lore and history, between tribe and individual: the books which deal with the earlier periods may contain relics of early times, but they cannot be regarded as contemporary

chronicles: they represent the efforts of men of a later age to explain the conditions of things around them. Not being men of critical power, they have gathered loosely together certain traditions, songs and stories which they knew: the result is a number of composite books of unequal value; but though the elements of which these books are formed are of unequal value, they are not therefore of no value: in the hands of experts they become of the greatest service, guiding us to the reconstruction of the past. As we read these books the mists of the legend and tradition begin to melt away: figures of great personalities appear definite, tangible, human: we can follow the main outline of their story: we can realise something of that which they achieved, and of what the world owes to them. In this way, after much searching investigation, the pivot characters of Old Testament story are given back to us. The personal reality of Moses has never been doubted: Joshua can not be dismissed as a myth or a mistake: the tendency of thought will establish, before long, the existence of Abraham as a real personality; and, however much the tribal and individual stories may have been mingled, we shall not lose the ethical and spiritual teaching, which is given to us in the stories of Jacob and Joseph.

How the Heroes are restored to Us. And here perhaps it is needful to discriminate between two statements on these matters which have not, I think, been sufficiently separated from one another. The critic, for instance, tells us that in searching back for the origin and progenitors of

Israel we cannot regard Abraham, for example, as an historical personage. The statement startles and pains the ordinary Bible reader: it seems to him to amount to a denial of the existence of Abraham; he remembers One who said, 'Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad' (John viii. 56): he feels that his faith is shaken when he is asked to believe that no such individual as Abraham ever existed. But he is not asked to do this. The statement of the critic implies no denial of the existence of Abraham: no scientific student would ever venture upon such an indefensible statement. The statement of the critic only amounts to this, that the narrative given us in the Book of Genesis cannot be accepted as a complete and exhaustive account of the origin and progenitors of Israel, and that if we insist upon so regarding it we are confusing tribal and individual story. The narrative in Genesis is a compilation—various narratives are interfused: incidents which clearly belong to the intercourse or rivalry between tribe and tribe are described under names which seem to us individual: the patriotic feeling of a later age carries back the ethical superiority of Israel to earlier times, while the latest editors have breathed their own religious spirit over picturesque stories, long current among the people. Thus an idealising of the past, in harmony with later ideas, takes place. Under these circumstances it is easy to understand what the critic means when he refuses to regard certain names as historic personages: he means that he cannot hang upon them the weight of after events, as he can upon those

great actors of the world's story, like Napoleon or Oliver Cromwell, like St. Paul or Isaiah, but he does not mean that there were no such people as Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He means that the narratives which we possess are surcharged with the idealism of a later time : that in their present picturing a foreshortening has taken place : that the struggles of tribes and the adventures of persons have been mingled together. In fact, the survey of the part which is given us is like the view of a coast line seen from a somewhat distant height : we can see what appears to be a general outline of the coast, but it would be very unsafe to construct a map out of what is visible. Many a rocky headland exists which is out of sight : the dimpling outline conceals many a fold of land where a sheltering harbour can be found : the sweep of grass and sea which is embraced in our view gives no indication of the precipitous cliffs and bits of sandy beach which are the true barriers between meadow and ocean. The prospect is fair, beautiful and invigorating, but the spectator cannot treat the landscape as he sees it, as though it were measured and surveyed ; and the expert who tells us that such an outlook furnishes insufficient data for the construction of a chart must not be held to disparage the value of the view for other purposes. It may serve for joy to the eye and health to the frame when it does not serve for navigation or for geographical record.

The Attitude of Experts. The application is clear. The Biblical critic cannot treat compiled, condensed and

heterogeneous narratives as he can contemporary records : he may hesitate to accept as having scientific historical value that which he by no means denies may be founded upon fact. Thus, for example, Kuenen takes the view that the names in Genesis are often those of tribes rather than individuals, and that therefore as progenitors of tribes they must be regarded as personifications rather than persons, but he does not therefore dismiss the stories as though there were no real individuals corresponding to the names mentioned in the narrative. On the contrary he says, ' In the abstract it is possible that such persons as Abraham, Isaac and Jacob should have existed. We can imagine that such and such incidents in the accounts regarding them really took place and were handed down by tradition. What, for example, should hinder us from assuming that some centuries before Israel settled in Canaan a mighty shepherd-prince named Abraham set up his tents near Hebron and had formed a league with the people who inhabited the land at that time ? ' (*Religion of Israel*, Vol. I. p. 113). Similarly Professor Driver tells us that the view which best satisfies the circumstances of the case is ' the view that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are historical persons, and that the accounts which we have of them are *in outline* historically true, but that their characters are idealised and their biographies in many respects coloured by the feelings and associations of a later age ' (*Hastings' Bible Dictionary*, Article ' Jacob '). When we remember how many idealised biographies of comparatively recent times are in circulation, and which

possess, in spite of their idealism, considerable value, we may well be content with the view of the Genesis biographies set forth by the critics I have cited. We are put on our guard against making the stories bear too much : we are warned against hasty inferences and very literal interpretations, but we are not deprived of these studies of ancient characters which have formed the basis of much teaching which has made for faith.

CHAPTER XIII

THE GOSPELS AND THE CHRIST

Fascination of Questions touching the Gospels. The questions which attract great and special attention to-day are the questions which gather round the Gospel story. We can readily understand the fascination of the subject. It arises from two causes: on the one hand, it is the natural outworking of the critical principle which is now accepted among scholars. Every book has to give account of itself: its claim to originality, if such a claim exists, must be investigated: its value as a witness or evidence of contemporary events must be estimated: its relationship to other books or narratives must be understood.

Criticism must move. It was not to be expected that criticism, having entered upon the field, would pause or stay its progress before the doors of the most sacred shrine of the Christian faith. It is true that some eager and impatient hands have been held up in protest, and loud voices have bidden the investigators to leave at least the holy place untouched. But protests of this kind are not only vain: they seem to me to be unworthy: they

appear to me confessions of weak, not tokens of strong, faith. At anyrate just as the archæologist investigates every part of some ancient abbey, and rightly says that only as he is allowed to roam about and dig freely where he will can the true history of the building be disclosed, so it is both faithless and unwise to stay the course of the investigator, because in the course of his examination he draws near to the very altar of religion.

Increased Interest in the Person of Jesus Christ. But if on the one hand the synoptic problem is interesting wherever the progress of criticism has been followed with attention, on the other hand its fascination is due to the widening and increasing interest taken in everything connected with the person of Jesus Christ. Men may have thrown aside a good deal of their faith : many dogmas which were freely accepted a generation or two ago are now viewed with indifference, only made piquant by a faint surprise that they ever provoked controversy. Who is agitated any longer by dogmas about predestination and free will ? Does eschatological doctrine evoke the angry spirit which was awakened thirty years ago ? Men's minds have moved towards different problems now, and one figure exercises a commanding and growing influence over men's thoughts. Men everywhere are turning from the strife of the churches to the person of Jesus Christ. They wish to know what He really said and taught : they feel that in His hand is the key to a thousand questions : everything which will bring Him nearer to

them, and make His word, person and work clearer to them is full of attraction. Naturally, therefore, the questions, which touch the Gospel history, whether treated by the critical expert or the ethical interpreter, command the attention of multitudes. Now, as of old, Jesus Christ sits upon the mountain, round which thousands of earnest and anxious men are gathered: all are straining to hear His voice. It is of moment to them to know what He said. The awakened spiritual interest as well as the progressive critical method has given attraction to what is called the synoptic problem. Men have asked what is the structural relationship of the three gospels? How are these related to the fourth? What amount of original and contemporary history can we reach by examining these gospels?

Some General Features. I can only briefly indicate one or two features of this problem. It will be well to begin with getting rid of one obsolete misconception. No thoughtful man regards the four gospels as four absolutely independent narratives: no doubt different writers were concerned in putting the respective gospels in their present forms, but they cannot be treated as they once were as stories written in complete isolation and without thought of or reference to what others had said. Further, the Gospel of St. John obviously stands alone, while the three other gospels are closely and intimately related to one another. These three, called the Synoptic Gospels, give rise to the synoptic problem. For the moment,

therefore, we may leave the Fourth Gospel out of view.

The Synoptic Gospels. When we examine the three gospels, St. Matthew, St. Mark and St. Luke, we find that there are certain portions which are common to all three : there are other portions which are common to two gospels, but lacking in the remaining gospel : and lastly, each gospel has a portion peculiar to itself. Suppose we call the portions common to all three gospels, the common stock. The term is not inappropriate, because from what I have said it will be clear that such a common stock existed. Then it would seem that in each gospel we have an edition of the common stock gospel with certain additions. These additions vary in kind : some are additions which are peculiar and characteristic : others are additions shared, so to speak, with another editor.

The Common Stock Gospel. If our desire is to reach the nearest sources of information about Jesus Christ, they will (so far as the Synoptic Gospels are concerned) be found in the common stock gospel. In this we have the earliest stratum, a stratum which lies below the strata of additions. Whatever is found here belongs to the earliest period ; and being common stock, it belongs in all probability to the period before editing was thought of. It belongs to the time when one tale or set of tales was told from lip to lip, and was repeated, as is the habit of people who write but little, in the same words every time ;

for it is characteristic of people who are without literary training, that they seldom vary their narrative : they lack the verbal flexibility and artistic imagination to deviate much from what they once heard. This tendency to keep to the same words was likely to be fostered in the early Church ; for we know that catechetical instruction was common. This method would tend to stereotype the memory of the words in which the story was told. Now, this tenacity of original form is both the weakness and the strength of popular narrative : it is the weakness, for till the poet or artist arises the narrative remains deficient in light and shade : it is the strength, for it ensures a certain trustworthiness of tradition. Tenacity of memory for words once used is natural to those whose vocabulary is small. Tenacity of memory for words grows strong in ages in which writing is comparatively rare. These conditions make for exactitude. The common stock gospel comes, in all probability, within the range of these conditions, and it seems likely that it brings us into immediate contact with the very earliest form of narrative : it embodies the accepted version of the Gospel story current in the early Christian society.

Constitutes a Record of Real Value. It is not too much to say that we have in this common stock a highly valuable historical contribution, if not absolutely contemporary at least so nearly contemporary that it may be regarded as a narrative of facts practically accepted among those who were well acquainted with the story. One example of

the early and ready acceptance of this common stock gospel is to be found in the Gospel of St. Luke. St. Luke's Gospel bears the marks of a cultivated editor. The opening portions possess the general qualities of culture and finish : this writer is in his way a master of style : witness the introduction in the first chapter. But when once this master of style is embarked on his way, and desires to relate some fact or incident which belongs to the common stock gospel, he adopts the very language of that common stock gospel : he lowers his style, if we may use the expression, to incorporate into his narrative the words of the current tradition. Nothing short of a reverent regard for what was generally accepted would have led such a man to imbed into his story the rougher strata of the earlier narrative.

It is upon this earliest narrative—this common stock gospel—that we must fix our attention. In it we have what we may call, without disparagement to the veracity of any additions found in the several gospels, the most valuable and authentic recital of the story of Jesus Christ.

The Supreme Question is that of Jesus Christ. Now, as it seems to me, the question of questions in this matter is this—What sort of a portrait of Jesus Christ do we gather from this common stock gospel? If we allow for a moment the added details of the story derived from the several gospels to remain out of sight, and fix our attention simply and solely on the common stock gospel, does the

impression left by the story yield to us a picture of Jesus Christ which appeals with resistless force to our moral nature? Do we possess in Him, so portrayed, the ideal Christ who stands far above us, calling us up to Him and unto Him?

The Portrait given is full of Inexpressible Moral Beauty. The full answer to this question would be too long for this work. It is enough to say that if any student will confine his attention to this common stock gospel, and will allow the character and portraiture of Jesus Christ as given in it to fill his thoughts, he will find that he is confronted by one who suggests to him the noblest possibilities of man's nature. It is this character, apart from any miraculous or supernatural accessories, which has profoundly impressed mankind : it is this character which still holds up, as it were, its own ideal to humanity : it is this character which is so truly human that it transcends human nature as we know it. We feel that the ethical spirit which it brings into life is a spirit which is above our life. In the sphere of morals it is completely Divine to us.

Relation of Moral Supremacy to Miraculous Element. Now, in the common stock gospel, the miraculous accessories connected with the birth and resurrection of Jesus Christ do not find a place. These accessories are found in the group of secondary witnesses, *i.e.*, in narrative common to two evangelists. These have their own

historical value, recognised by thoughtful students; but upon these, in the first instance, we have purposely refused to lay stress. Our belief in Jesus Christ must be based upon moral conviction: not upon physical wonder. The argument that He was wonderfully born and miraculously raised, and that therefore He was of God, does not appeal to the modern mind, and, even if it did, it would produce at the best an intellectual assent, not a worthy or an acceptable faith. It would only compel belief in facts about Christ; it would not awaken faith in Him. For this we must perceive the spiritual revelation which is in Him. In other words, we must invert the process. The weight of the argument, then, hangs upon Christ Himself, upon His character, upon His moral splendour and upon His unequivocal spiritual supremacy: it is because He interprets us so completely to ourselves that we recognise the God in Him, and recognising this, the physical marvels at the opening and close of His career do not appear incongruous. I could never believe in His moral goodness merely because I believed in His being wonderfully born or wonderfully raised from the dead; but believing in His moral goodness, I feel the divinity which is in Him, and it is no marvel to me that other wonders should find a place in His career. You can never compel moral admiration by physical power, but you can understand that the lower ranges of life may be subservient to one whose greatness lies in the higher, *i.e.*, in the moral order of life. It is easier to believe in the wonders through Christ, than to believe in Christ through the wonders.

When we thus reverse the method of the earlier apologists we are reverting to the method of Christ Himself. He sighed over those who asked miracles as a means to faith: He declared that He would enter the souls of men only in a legitimate fashion: He would appeal to them by that which they could immediately appreciate and understand: 'He that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep' (John x. 2). 'Why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?' 'An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign.'

CHAPTER XIV

THE GOSPEL OF THE ETERNAL CHRIST

Unique Character of the Fourth Gospel. The Fourth Gospel stands alone. Every reader of the New Testament must be sensible of the difference in tone between it and the other gospels. This difference may be expressed by saying that it is distinctively theological or philosophical in tone. Or, to put the matter in another way, we may say that while the earlier gospels, and especially the common stock gospel, narrate events with little other thought than that of the chronicler, the Fourth Gospel aims more or less at the philosophy of the history. The writer sees in Jesus Christ something more than the Prophet of Nazareth who went about doing good, or the promised Messiah who might fulfil the hopes of Israel: he sees in Jesus Christ the explanation of all life: the key to Divine purposes of wider range than the limits of Israel.

Some Features of the Gospel. To him Jesus Christ is the Word, the expression of the Father's thought, and will and purpose. As such He brings a key to unlock many of the closed doors of life. Accordingly the author shows us Jesus Christ in action: he shows His relation

to various typical human aspirations, joys, perplexities and needs. He shows Jesus Christ satisfying the hopes of men (i. 45), supplying their joys (ii. 1-10), entering into their perplexities (iii. 1-15), revealing to them the depth of their own nature (iv. 7-19), rousing their dormant energy (v. 1-6). These are obvious, but a little closer observation shows us the spiritual plane in which the writer's thoughts move. His conceptions of the work of Christ are not only much wider than the hopes of Israel, they are always far above the material and physical levels to which men's thoughts so commonly cling. He sees, if we may speak so, behind or beneath the historical Christ, the spiritual, eternal Christ: his text, like St. Paul's, is, 'Though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more.' It is this writer which gives us those deeply spiritual sayings of Christ. 'The true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for such doth the Father seek to be his worshippers' (iv. 23). 'It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I have spoken unto you are spirit and are life' (vi. 63). It is the same writer which emphasises the force of inward conviction based on ethical sensibility. 'If any man willet to do God's will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God or whether I speak of myself' (vii. 17), and again, 'If a man love me, he will keep my word; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him' (xiv. 23). It is not

necessary to increase quotations of this kind. The high spiritual plane which they indicate is sufficiently clear.

The Spiritual Christ. The Spiritual Christ—the Word of the Father—reconciling man to life by the life of the Spirit—is the figure which we see in this Fourth Gospel. Such a Christ will not appeal to outward works: He does not value an adhesion to His cause which is based upon material or physical wonders. He is Himself His own witness. His language is ‘Come and see,’ and those who abide with Him go away convinced that in Him the aspirations of past ages can be satisfied (i. 45-51). It is He who can turn the poor and strengthless things of life into invigorating and joy-bringing forces (ii. 9), and the key to such wonders is ever in the hand of those who serve (ii. 9). It is He that teaches the perplexed mind that what is needed in order to understand life is not explanations, but changed ethical conditions: not fresh knowledge, but a clean heart, brings the power of inward vision (iii. 5-8). Similarly the weary and dissatisfied soul, tossed upon the waves of passion, and conscious of the drudgery and servitude which follow passion indulged, is taught by Him as by one who understands her and can lead her to living waters (iv. 10-19). He teaches another that power to change a life of uselessness into one of service is always near to the resolute soul (v. 6-9.) And as we leave the portion of the Gospel in which narrative abounds, we reach long discourses, the burden of which is that the satisfaction of

life and its power are to be sought in the spiritual, not in the material plane.

The Spiritual is the Eternal. The power of the kingdom is an inward power : the emancipation to be sought after is the emancipation of the soul. The spiritual vision being directed to eternal realities, and not to temporary appearances, is open to every age. It is the apprehension of the Word or law of the eternal order which can become a living force in men. As we follow the Gospel, the local and temporary embodiments of truth become less and less : they drop out of sight, if not out of significance : we are brought face to face with the workings of changeless principles which touch life on all sides ; we are taught to recognise one great and ruling order of things, and we realise that Christ is the law of this order.

The Gospel carries us beyond Time. This Gospel, therefore, is a step towards the Philosophy of Christianity : Christianity is an historical religion : it has roots in historical facts : it enters as a real experience in the developing life of humanity : it finds expression in the time-movements of this development, but though it is in time (so much so that there was a fulness of time for its manifestation) it is yet above time : it expresses a law which time can reveal, but a law which is also above time : a law which belongs to the heart of things as they are : it discloses the Divine nature. It discloses God by

revealing man : it explains man to himself by revealing man in God. In other words, while the Synoptic Gospels are full of interest as historical documents, yet Christianity is not exhausted in the historical facts to which they bear witness : Christianity is pre-eminently the revelation of One life, but it is the revelation also of all life : the all is included in the one. Thus a theology is possible : facts in time cannot of themselves give rise to a theology : they are correctives of false theologies, but unless we can relate historical facts to principles which are outside time we cannot have a theology. This is no romanticism. It is only applying methods which are at the basis of science. Facts do not make science : they can correct immature science ; but they do not make it, for unless we can relate these facts to some wide inclusive principles or constant laws we have no science.

Its importance. The importance of the Fourth Gospel in the unfolding of the principles of Christianity becomes clear. In it we are stepping from facts to the interpretation of facts, from the Jesus Christ of the history to the Jesus Christ of all time, the one who is yesterday, to-day and for ever. Theology has caused a great deal of trouble in the world : it has been the source of feud, animosity and persecution : it has fallen, often deservedly, into disrepute : it has engendered, and we can hardly wonder at it, a profound suspicion of itself in the minds of men ; but it has seldom done so when it has kept close to Christ, and has made Him the key and the revelation



of life. It is easy to take eternal principles and ground upon them inferences which would only be true were eternal things changed into temporal: it is easy to drop back into Judaistic conceptions, and treat the Christ as though He were the Christ after the flesh: it is easy, in fact, to become unspiritual again, but if we are true to the direction in which the Fourth Gospel leads us, we shall reach the regions in which spiritual and eternal ideas will keep us above the plane in which a large number of controversies have been fought.

The Question of Authorship is interesting. It is not within my province to enter into the question of the authorship of St. John's Gospel. One remark, however, may be made. The question of authorship assumes in a modern mind an aspect very different from that in which it would present itself to the contemporaries of the Apostles. The general fact or feeling that St. John exercised a dominating influence over the compilation of the gospel, or even the conviction that the gospel embodied narratives or phases of thought derived from the beloved disciple, would be sufficient to warrant the ancient in considering John as the author of the gospel. The idea of authorship was much looser, in fact, in early times than it is to-day. It is quite conceivable that the present form of the gospel has been reached after passing through an editing process; but it is difficult to get rid of the Johannine element which has been woven in with it. There are parts of it so tender in touch and so intimate in

feeling that it is difficult to avoid the conviction that we have in them genuine personal reminiscences: there are incidents, sayings and gestures recorded which are wonderful indeed if they do not embody the story of an eye-witness (chaps. xx. and xxi.).

The Spiritual Value is more. But here, as before, we may remember that the value of a book is in many respects independent of its author. Let it be said that St. John did not write this gospel as we now know it, yet whoever gave to it its present form has opened to the Church of Christ that lofty spiritual conception of the work and person of Christ which is not only a protest against the demoralising Judaistic conceptions of Christianity which have been popular among superficial people, but a presentation of the Lord of the human soul which has brought counsel, conviction and consolation to multitudes, who through it have been led above the world to Him who overcame the world.

CHAPTER XV

THE SPIRIT FOR BIBLE STUDY

The Spiritual Value remains. If in the Bible we have pictures of God's dealings with men, examples of His ways of guiding their lives, and of unfolding to them more and more of His character: if it supply us with real and worthy conceptions of the relation we bear to Him and He to us, then it is clearly well worth our while to study the Bible. That, however, which daunts many of us is the feeling that there are difficulties in our way, that we cannot reach the lessons unless we are possessed of great scholarship and well-trained judgment. I hope that I have already said enough to show that these apprehensions are based upon a mistaken view of the direction and results of modern criticism. If I have made clear the distinction between the ethical value and the literary historical value of the earlier narratives, it will be seen that criticism has not deprived the uneducated reader of any really valuable teaching. As Professor Cheyne says: 'The religious value is for all; the historical or quasi-historical for students only' (*Encycl. Bib.*, art. 'Abraham'). If the simple reader thus loses nothing, the reader who has in any degree followed the course of modern criticism has opened to him new fields of

teaching, a clearer conception of the methods of the Divine education of mankind, a more accurate standard of measuring the stages of man's religious advance. Again, to quote the same writer, 'The wonderful ways by which God led the people of Israel towards the light of life may be studied in that strangely composite work, the Hexateuch, with as much benefit to edification as in the Psalms or the prophecies' (*Encycl. Bib.*, art 'Hexateuch.')

Knowledge increases Opportunity of Profit. When from the somewhat complex narratives we turn to Psalms, Prophecies, and Epistles, we find that modern scholarship has opened to us treasures of knowledge and edification which are abundant compared with those which were the heritage of our forefathers. We are able more clearly to estimate the religious influence, the example and personal heroism of the Prophets. 'Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted?' becomes a question pregnant with historical significance, as we realise that the prophet often was the man in advance of his age, misunderstood, maligned and ill-treated. Let anyone read, for example, Professor Barnes' book on Isaiah, and then say whether he does not rise from the study of it with heightened admiration of the prophet's character, as well as loftier and more enlightened conceptions of the prophet's work and function in the national history. Or let him study, and he can hardly do better, Professor G. A. Smith's admir-

able volumes, for example, those on Isaiah or the Minor Prophets, and then say whether he has not realised as he never realised before those prophets in relation to their times, and whether he has not learned to appreciate the dignity and the progressive value of the work which these men wrought in Israel. Under such guidance, the study of the Prophets becomes not only luminous, but charged with that personal and dramatic interest which invests men and their words with life. We no longer need to read the Bible with the blinds of our intelligence half drawn down : we no longer open the pages of the Prophets with the feeling that we are to force ourselves, as once seemed necessary, into a mental attitude, which was a strange mixture of anxious devoutness and a pained sense of a lack of comprehension—a state of mind in which we felt self-reproached if we did not gather spiritual refreshment from the study, while our intellectual honesty compelled us to feel that we did not really understand what we had read. Now all that is needed is a calm mind, the Revised Version, the aid of one of the many valuable monographs on the special book we are studying, and fruitful lessons will flow in upon our thoughts. We live, too, in an age in which education is recognised as necessary : if criticism has brought new problems, the advance of education is rapidly enabling us to understand and to measure them. One thing, however, education cannot do, it can never be a substitute for personal thought, personal patience, personal spiritual consciousness.

The Spiritual Relationship unfolded by Degrees. I have said that the supreme question in the Bible is the question of the relation between God and man. It is not the question of the authenticity or historical accuracy of this passage or that: it is the question whether the soul of man can find its home in the heart of the great Father of all. The Bible, in its slow and wise unfolding of that relationship between God and mankind, between God and the individual soul, leads us to see how close, tender, intimate and indissoluble this relationship may be: it gives expression to the yearnings of man's soul to find out its God: it gives expression to the love and tenderness which abide in the heart of God. Follow its developing thought, and we are led on step by step to the highest spiritual conceptions. 'God is love: he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.' Lesser and lower notions pass away: they are as nothing compared with thoughts like these. 'If a man love me he will keep my word and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him' (John xiv. 23). 'I have been crucified with Christ, yet I live, and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me' (Gal. ii. 20).

Through varying Scenes and Times. In the atmosphere of such thoughts we realise the enormous range of progress through which the Bible has traced the education of man: we have passed through the various class rooms: we have seen man taught through experience, through

codes of law and custom, through ceremony, through doctrines, through his eye, his ear, his mind, his pain and joy, his hopes and fears: we have seen how he has been led through partial and imperfect ideas to larger and deeper thoughts, how by slow degrees the drapery of religion is laid aside and the heart of it is disclosed, how mechanical worship has been allowed to drop away, like the kindergarten stage in children's education, how ceremonial religion is destined to give place to spiritual, how dogmatic conceptions have been ever liable to change as knowledge advanced, and how continuous has been the unfolding of spiritual ideas. And if among the various and incessant changes which this conception of God's education involves we ask whether the landmarks of assured faith are not liable to be removed, we have our answer ready.

Constant Law consistent with Vicissitudes. If the world's history is the unfolding of God's education of the race, we should recognise that the constancy of His purpose is quite consistent with recurring changes. As pupils rise from class to class the text-books are changed, but as His purpose does not change, so neither do the principles which mark His relationship to men alter from age to age. Whatever differences there may be between the primer and the advanced text-book of science, the natural laws which they both seek to explain remain the same. Similarly, if the Bible affords us a sort of key-map to the method of God's education of the race, the changes which are

the conditions of progressive education will be reflected in the key-map; but the supreme end and aim of the educating wisdom will be seen to remain unchanged. This is precisely what our Lord pressed upon the consideration of the Jews. Some of them stumbled at the changes of the Divine procedure: they could not see that constancy of purpose might be best exhibited by variety of method. In their view there was not co-operation but contradiction between John the Baptist and Jesus Christ. Our Lord saw in the mission of John the Baptist a step in the working of God's purpose which He knew to be the inspiration of His own message also. He saw that the same laws might underlie divergent phenomena, and the same love might employ both severity and tenderness. The God who sent the north wind was the same God who sent the south wind: the God of the storm was the God of the sunshine also. Amid seasonal changes there might be constant laws. So also was it with the spiritual education of man.

One Purpose but many Means. Various prophets, giving forth portions of the Divine message as men were able to hear it, were not contradictory organs of Divine truth. The apprehension of the concrete, too, must for growing intelligences precede the understanding of the abstract: the religion of rules, types, laws, must go before the religion of great spiritual principles. But no variation of rule or type or law could alter the constant principles which arose out of the original relationship between God

and man. Penetrate beneath the surface, and it will be found that the earliest text-book is preparing the child's mind to understand some wide-reaching and changeless principle. Penetrate beneath the surface of human history, or of that wonderful and typical section of it which is contained in the Bible, and it will be seen that the preparatory stages of it are continually making easier of comprehension to man the conditions of the relationship between him and his heavenly Father. He is being prepared to realise himself as a son of God, and he learns the threefold meaning of this relationship. He depends upon God: that he learns early. He must be one with God: that, too, comes as a fruitful truth sooner or later in his education. But, again, this oneness must not be oneness of bargain but oneness of sympathy: it must bring about in man the desire to share the Divine aims, and actively to fulfil the Father's purposes: it must be, in fact, oneness of spirit. To perfect this harmony of relationship man must share God's spirit. This triple necessity of dependence upon God, reconciled fellowship with Him, and ready fulfilment of His will, has found expression in the final stages of the Bible revelation. When we reach the age of the spirit the book closes, as though the last word were written. Henceforth, to those who understand, the worship in spirit and in truth is enough. The harmony between God and the soul is not to be found in material or physical suffering, but in free will and in spirit. The highest step is reached in the revelation of Christ dwelling in man: the final

need is the penetration of the heart, mind and life with the spirit of Christ, which is all in all.

The Golden Key to Life. The moment we realise this, the golden key is in our hands. For this all the past was preparing: from the realisation of this the golden age will date (Rom. viii. 19). This is none other than God with us: God in all: it is love in all (Matt. xxv. 31-46; 1 Cor. xiii. 1-13; Rom. xiii. 8-10; 1 John iv. 12). When this is spiritually understood, life becomes more simple and more complex: more simple, because its principle is spiritual self-identification with God, *i.e.*, Christ in us: more complex, because the range of duties arising from this principle is wide, various, lifelong and imperious. We reach a realm which lifts us above minor difficulties. Questions of date and of literal interpretation are of small moment. What matter is the how and the when of the incidents of human history, so long as the manhood is taken into God, and we ourselves dwell in Him, seeing therefore all things in the light of His love, and He in us, we therefore doing all things by the inspiration of His love.

The Treasures which are left to the Simple. We may recur once more to Cowper's pious peasant. What is her position after all that has been said? Can she sit down with the happy confidence of former years and read her Bible, and derive from it spiritual strength? Or is she to be told that one portion after another of the Old

Book has been proved to be untrue? Is she to be left with only the fragments of the Book on which she peacefully and confidently relied?

If what I have said has been followed, I believe she can go on with her reading. She did not represent the historical critic, but the soul athirst for God. Does she seek to understand His ways of providence? The stories from Genesis to Chronicles can still illustrate God's ways. Does she seek to mark the righteousness of God? The same stories unfold the justice and severity of His laws, which show that whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap. Does she seek to realise the tender mercy of God? She can rejoice in the numberless examples of those who cried to God in their misery and found Him a ready help in time of trouble: she can hear the Psalm of Thanksgiving echoed from multitudes of grateful lips. 'O that men would therefore praise the Lord for his goodness, and declare the wonders that he doeth among the children of men.' Does she seek assurance of faith? She has it in the constant manifestation of the faithfulness of God. 'He hath ever been mindful of his covenant and promise which he made to a thousand generations,' or still more, perhaps, in the unfolding of the Divine character, which meets her in the developing history of the Old Testament, and in the indestructible evidence of His love made manifest in the story and preaching of the Gospel. Does she seek with heartfelt sorrow for the certainty of the forgiveness of God? No criticism can rob her of the deep and abiding comfort of such Divine

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